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THE SPARK OF LIFE

FANTASTIC COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS

BY
HARRY L. NEWTON

AUTHOR OF

*"All on Account of Polly," "The Corner Drug Store," "Everyyouth,"
"The Goodfellow," "Good Mornin' Judge," "The Heiress
of Hoetown," "Jayville Junction," "The Little Red
School House," "A Rehearsal at Ten," "The
Rest Cure," "Teacher Kin I Go
Home?" "When the Circus
Came to Town," etc.*



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THE SPARK OF LIFE

CHARACTERS.

HERMAN HEINIE.....*A German Doll Maker*
BUD BARLOW.....*A College Youth*
TOMMY TUCKER.....*The "Darling Child"*
WILLARD PECK.....*The Mysterious Stranger*
CLARICE*Bud's Sweetheart*
TOOTS SNODGRASS.....*The House Maid*
MRS. HEINIE.....*The Old Doll Maker's Second Wife*
DORA MEE.....*A Neighbor's Daughter*

NOTE.—The character of the old German doll maker will be just as effective if "done" in other dialect.

ACT I—Living room in Herman's house. Morning.
ACT II—The same. Afternoon.
ACT III—Lawn in front of Herman's house. Evening.

TIME—*The Present.*

PLACE—*Happy Hollow, New Hampshire.*

~~THE PLAY IS ABOUT TWO HOURS~~ —*About Two Hours.*

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COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

HERMAN HEINIE—A quaint, lovable old German, about 55. Gray wig and smoothly shaven face. "Cracked" on the subject of discovering the spark of life that it may be adapted to his newest and most wonderful of doll creations. In Acts I and II wears blue shirt, long apron and dark trousers. In Act III, white shirt, lounging coat and dark trousers.

BUD BARLOW—Bright, snappy college youth. Change to Mephisto costume in Act I. Last act, ordinary business suit.

TOMMY TUCKER—"Silly Kid" type. About 19 years of age. In Acts I and II wears shirt waist, knee pants, long stockings and large bow tie. In Act III changes to ill-fitting suit with long trousers, much too tight, and short coat with flower in button hole. Wears an old-fashioned derby hat which is two sizes too small and which he has great difficulty in keeping on head.

WILLARD PECK—About 26 years of age. Wears a rusty black suit and high silk hat. Eccentric in manner and speech.

CLARICE.—A sweet young girl of about 19. Wears pretty gown in first part of Act I, changing to doll dress and blonde doll wig. In Act III, pretty summer dress.

TOOTS SNODGRASS—A typical "Sis Hopkins" character, with drawling speech and stupid actions. Wears calico dress and apron in Acts I and II and gorgeous evening gown in Act III.

MRS. HEINIE—Talkative, handsome woman of about 40. Wears modest gowns in Acts II and III and handsome evening gown in Act III.

DORA MEE—Aged about 17. First appearance, wears summer frock and sunbonnet. In Acts II and III, pretty summer frocks.

STORY OF THE PLAY.

Herman Heinie, an eccentric genius and doll maker, has perfected a wonderful mechanical doll which he calls his Masterpiece. It is made in the image of his niece, Clarice, and is a most lifelike creation. He has become obsessed with the idea that he can endow it with life and his search for the life principle is rapidly undermining his reason. While he is beloved by his son Tommy and his niece, he is hen-pecked by his second wife, who has no sympathy with his life work.

Bud Barlow, a college youth in love with Clarice, realizes the seriousness of his condition and consults a physician. He is advised to make Herman believe that he has succeeded in his search, and then, by a sudden revelation or shock, restore the old man's reason. Herman has made up his mind to call to his aid the power of the Evil One and Bud plots with Clarice to disguise himself as Mephisto and have her impersonate the doll.

It works. Apparently the doll comes to life and Herman is delighted. He plans to have her and his son Tommy marry. The mysterious stranger appears, and Herman, thinking he is trying to steal his invention, drives him away. Many complications ensue. Mrs. Heinie falls in love with his Satanic Majesty, making Clarice jealous. Toots, the house maid, who is in love with Tommy, also becomes jealous when she sees him making love to Clarice. Then the Masterpiece disappears and Herman is left disconsolate with his plans all gone awry.

So Bud abandons his disguise and is shunned by everyone except Toots, who plans with him to bring the lovers together again. Clarice confesses to Herman the deception played upon him. At first he is overcome with disappointment, but gradually his reason asserts itself and makes a new man of him. He resolves to give up his useless search and to no longer be ruled by his shrewish wife. Bud assists in the reconciliation of Toots and Tommy and is about to straighten out his own tangled love affair when the mysteri-

ous stranger again appears with information which threatens to upset everything. However, love triumphs; Peck is betrothed to Dora Mee and the three couples are reunited. Herman, now master of his household, surveys the spooning couples and concludes that at last he has found the Spark of Life for which he has been searching, in the love affairs of the young folks.

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. Herman Heinie, the eccentric doll maker of Happy Hollow, searching for the Spark of Life with which to put the breath of life into his Masterpiece. Toots, the maid of all work, who is afraid of work, but knows how to extract a tip. "Ain't he just splen-did." The Mephistophelian plot which brings the doll to life. Everybody happy, but not for long. The Mysterious Stranger. "I beg your pardon." The dream come true, but—

ACT II. In which Mrs. Heinie falls in love with the devil, and the road of true love has many twists and turns. The Mysterious Stranger who would not "stay put." A new recipe for angel food spoiled by too many cooks. The Masterpiece disappears. Sixes and sevens. "I'll paint my face and be a real lady."

ACT III. "Everybody hates everybody they shouldn't and everybody loves everybody they shouldn't." Bud, the cause of it all, as popular as an Indian with the smallpox. The deception disclosed. Herman turns over a new leaf. "I bought a new pair of trousers yesterday, and, by golly, I'm going to wear them from now on." The worm turns; back to the kitchen where you belong. The fifty-thousand-dollar legacy sacrificed for love. A triple courtship. "All my life I've been searching for the Spark of Life, and now at last I've found it. It's love, that's what it is—love." "Ain't he just splen-did."

LIST OF PROPERTIES.

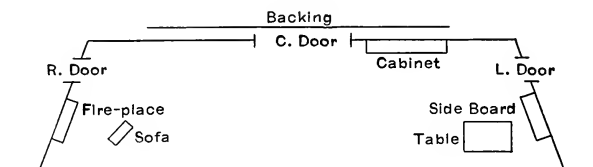
ACT I—Broom and bits of paper. Several coins for Bud. Water pail and sponge. Crash box, off stage. Small package of flashlight powder. Ratchet, to produce cranking sound.

ACT II—Cook book. Large spoon. Baking pan. Large china bowl. Small bag of flour. Two eggs. Can of mustard. Orange. Horse pistol. Dishpan and towel.

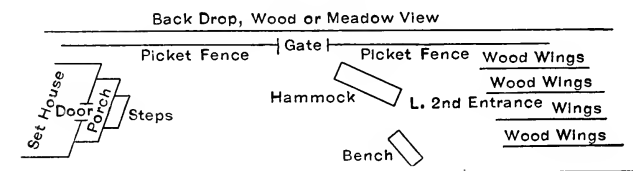
ACT III—Three or four flower pots, to break. Pipe, tobacco and match, for Herman. Legal document, for Peck. Electric torch, for Herman.

SCENE PLOT.

ACTS I AND II.



ACT III.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc.; 1 *E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance, up stage, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat or scene running across back of the stage; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights; 1 *G.*, first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

THE SPARK OF LIFE

ACT I.

SCENE: *Living room in HERMAN'S house. Morning. Old-fashioned furniture and pictures. At back, L. of C., is a large cabinet, with curtains so arranged that they can be drawn apart by strings from wings. At C. are double doors, opening into HERMAN'S workshop. There is a large fireplace at R. 2. A small dining table with red cloth is down L. Sofa down R. Door at upper R. leading into adjoining room. Door at upper L. opening into garden. At rise, lights full on.*

Enter TOOTS from R. She has a broom and sweeps floor as she enters. Sweeps a quantity of paper and litter under a small rug, then replaces rug and drops exhausted into a chair.

TOOTS. Oh, dear me suds! I do wish somethin' would happen. I mean somethin' besides work. But there won't nothin' happen. Me, Toots Snodgrass, the purtiest gal in seven states, havin' to work all the blessed time. An' I got such a lovin' disposition, too. But so far in my beautiful existence it ain't got me no place. I ain't noticed no mad rush to lead me to the church altar. (*Looks about.*) Mighty queer doin's in this here house. Old Mr. Heinie is at work on his Masterpiece—whatever that is; he don't allow nobody to go in his workshop. Well, I ain't a-goin' to break my neck to git in there. Him and his crazy ideas has got me plumb scared to death. (*Loud knock on door L. She jumps with fright.*) Gosh! There goes three years more off of my young life.

Enter BUD, L., hurriedly. Stops abruptly in front of TOOTS.

BUD. Why, how do you do! I never expected to find you here. You are (*names some prominent actress*), are you not?

TOOTS. Yes, I am—not!

BUD. Oh, I get you now. At first glance I took you for (*prominent actress*). I see. You are Miss Toots Snodgrass. (*She smiles.*) Is Miss Clarice in?

TOOTS. Well, maybe she be, and then agin, maybe she beant. It all depends. (*Holds out her hand.*)

BUD (*laughs*). I see. (*Takes coin from pocket.*) Is she in or out?

TOOTS (*reaches for coin*). I think she be. (*Takes coin.*) Yes—I think she be.

BUD (*takes off hat and extends it to her*). My hat, Toots.

TOOTS (*looks curiously at hat*). Yes—so it be.

BUD (*laughs*). Well, take it.

TOOTS. Where to?

BUD. Hang it up.

TOOTS. Hang it up yourself an' see if I care.

BUD (*laughs*). All right. (*Throws hat in corner.*) Now please tell Miss Clarice I am here.

TOOTS. That'll be extra. (*Holds out hand for tip.*)

BUD (*produces coin*). Here you are. Now hurry.

TOOTS (*takes coin*). Hurryin' is extra.

BUD. Say, you're the wisest foolish person I ever met. (*Puts another coin in her hand.*) Now on your merry way.

TOOTS (*crosses to R., aside*). Ain't he just splen-did. (*Exit R.*)

Enter CLARICE, L.

CLARICE. Why, hello, Bud Barlow.

BUD (*whirling about and facing her*). Hello, Clarice. (*Rushes to embrace her, as—*)

TOOTS enter L. They embrace at C.

TOOTS. Say Mr. Barlow—oh, excuse me; you found her. (*Foolish giggle.*)

BUD (*releases CLARICE and faces TOOTS*). Miss Snodgrass, you are supposed to leave the room.

TOOTS (*significantly*). Well, *that'll* be extra. (*Holds out hand.*)

BUD (*produces coin and hands it to TOOTS*). All right. Now exceed the speed limit—your fine is paid.

TOOTS (*taking coin*). All right. Thank you. (*Starts toward R.*)

BUD. Just a moment, Miss Snodgrass. (*Toots stops.*) Miss Clarice and myself have something important to talk about. We do not wish to be interrupted. Now you keep your eyes open and tip me off if anybody is headed our way. Understand?

TOOTS (*grinning*). Yes, sir—but *that'll* be extra.

BUD (*produces coin*). This is all the "extra" you get—so beat it.

TOOTS (*takes coin, crosses to R. Aside at door*). Ain't he just splen-did. (*Exit R.*)

BUD (*to CLARICE*). I've got a terrible lot to do today and to tell you. (*Leads her to sofa, then sits beside her.*) It's about your uncle. We've got to knock that crazy idea out of his head that he can manufacture a doll that can actually breathe, talk, eat, sleep, and in fact act more like a human being than the majority of us. You know, your uncle's crazy—

CLARICE (*interrupting*). Bud Barlow, my uncle is *not* crazy.

BUD. I know; but he's got the squirrels following him. Now listen. (*Looks cautiously all about.*) You know, dearie, that I—
Enter TOOTS, R.

TOOTS. Mr. Barlow, there ain't nobody comin'. (*BUD and CLARICE annoyed.*)

BUD (*to TOOTS*). Get out. I'm busy.

TOOTS. All right. I just thought I'd tell you. (*Exit R.*)

BUD (*taking CLARICE's hand, tenderly*). I've been doing a little Sherlock Holmes stuff and I've discovered a few things. Your uncle is at work on a life-size model of a human being. He has the idea that this figure can be endowed with life and be as perfect in every way as—well, as you. (*CLARICE smiles.*) But of course that's impossible. There never will be anything on earth quite as perfect as you are. (*Starts to kiss her.*)

Enter TOOTS, R.

TOOTS. Say, Mr. Barlow, there ain't nobody comin' yet.

BUD (*annoyed at the interruption, jumps up, crosses to R.*). No, but there's *somebody* going. (*Rushes Toots off R. Comes back to sofa.*) Now, then, if your uncle isn't made to see the error of his ways, it's going to mean the loss of his reason—perhaps his life.

CLARICE. Oh, Bud! What can we do?

BUD. Here's my idea. I've about everything arranged to restore him to a normal condition of mind again. I am framing this up on the advice of a physician. He tells me that the only thing is to humor your uncle. Then, by some sort of a shock, suddenly reverse conditions and it will make a new man of him. Now your uncle is firmly convinced that all his wonderful doll needs is a spark of life and it will live. Upon going through my room I ran upon an old Mephisto costume I once wore at a mask ball. I shall don this rig, suddenly appear before your uncle and declare myself the real chap from down below, come to give the spark of life to his Masterpiece. Behold! Mephisto! (*Strikes an attitude.*)

CLARICE (*startled, rises*). Why, Bud Barlow!

BUD. You know what I mean. I am going to play the Devil—and fool your uncle. Plenty of red fire and all the other effects, and I shall have no difficulty in convincing your uncle that I have just arrived from—well, one place that can't be reached by a long distance telephone.

CLARICE (*interested*). It all sounds good. But what am I to do?

BUD. You play the star part—the doll. His wonderful creation, endowed with life. I put a crank on your back, and—bingo! You come to life. Great!

CLARICE. Oh, Bud, if it should succeed!

BUD. It will. All you've got to do is to plant the Mephisto idea in your uncle's brain, and the germ will develop.

CLARICE. But if it fails?

BUD. No chance. (*Takes her hand, tenderly*). Little girl, I'm doing this for two reasons. *You*—and your uncle. (*About to kiss her.*)

Enter TOOTS, R.

TOOTS. Say, Mr. Barlow, there ain't a soul comin' yet.

BUD. I don't care. We'll have it over with in a moment. Stand right there, Miss Snodgrass. Tell me. How do you like this? (*Kisses CLARICE.*)

TOOTS (*shakes head*). Never touched *me*.

BUD (*to CLARICE*). Come on, darling. We've got to get busy. (*To TOOTS.*) Good-bye, Miss Snodgrass. If anybody asks you, tell them it's colder in the summer than in New York. (*Grabs CLARICE, rushes her to L. and they exeunt.*)

TOOTS (*staring after them in amazement*). Well, I swan. He's as crazy as the old man. Guess I better get out of here before I get it.

TOOTS *starts for R., when enter DORA, L. Comes in bowing, giggling, etc.*

DORA. Good morning, Toots Snodgrass. It's a nice day, ain't it? My mother sent me over to see if she could borrow your lawn mower.

TOOTS (*mimicing*). Oh, is that there so? Well, you go back and tell *your* mother if we had a lawn mower we wouldn't speak to her.

DORA. Oh, very well. (*Takes a couple of steps backward, bows, takes a step forward and bows again.*) Mrs. Jones told my mother that your folks didn't have no lawn mower nohow, so my mother sent me over to prove it. (*Takes two steps backward, stops.*) Good day, Toots Snodgrass. (*Turns and marches to door L. and exits.*)

TOOTS. Dear me suds! There is some more lunatical. This ain't no place for a refined lady like me nohow. (*Starts for R.*)

Enter MRS. HEINIE, R.

MRS. HEINIE. Toots Snodgrass, what are you doing?

TOOTS. Nothin'.

MRS. HEINIE. You're always doin' that. Go in the next room and do it. Wait! I thought I heard voices. Has anyone been in?

TOOTS. Yes'm. He was here.

MRS. HEINIE. Whom do you mean by "he"? Never mind. I know to whom you refer. Now I've told you repeatedly that I don't want that person here. What did Bud Barlow want?

TOOTS. Same thing all men want—woman.

MRS. HEINIE. Humph! This nonsense must stop. Do you hear me? Stop! I won't have it. I have other plans for Clarice's future. She must marry above her station in life and not beneath it, as I have done. She's only my step-daughter, but I have a heart. Where's your master?

TOOTS. In his shop. (*At door C.*)

MRS. HEINIE. Humph! Always puttering in his shop. Go tell him I want to speak to him.

TOOTS (*aside*). If I ever catch the man that invented work, I'll get him a job in this crazy bungalow. (*Exit C.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*alone*). Fine state of affairs, I must say. That penniless college graduate dares to aspire to my step-daughter's hand. I'll stop that nonsense. (*Calls sharply.*) Herman! Herman, I say!

HERMAN (*off C.*). Coming, my dear.

Enter HERMAN, C. He wipes his hands on his apron as he enters.

MRS. HEINIE. I want you to understand that when I want you, I want you. Is that thoroughly understood, Herman Heinie?

HERMAN (*gently*). Yes, my dear. I hope it is an importance, otherwise I regret to be disturbed.

MRS. HEINIE. It is important—most important. You are idling away your time, Herman Heinie. Things have come to the point where something must be done. You haven't given me a penny in three months. My first husband was a money-maker. A money-maker, do you hear that?

HERMAN. Humph! I have heard that many times. I am going to say, speaking for myself, that I make more money accidentally than your first husband ever did on purpose. (*Chuckles.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*angrily*). Oh, it's no use. I don't know why I ever married you.

HERMAN. You know, my dear, I have asked myself the same question yet when I look at you.

MRS. HEINIE. That's enough. Quite enough. Now listen—

HERMAN. Sure. That's the only thing I ever get a chance to do with you.

MRS. HEINIE. Things must change about this house. Your eternal tinkering with those impossible dolls must cease. Also Clarice and her going with that worthless Bud Barlow must stop. Understand?

HERMAN. You are asking quite a large chunk in a couple of words, my dear.

MRS. HEINIE. I am merely asking for justice. Just because I was fool enough to marry a good-for-nothing, there's no reason why she should. (*At door R.*)

HERMAN (*roused at last*). Stop! I? I a good-for-nothing? You call *me* that? (*More calmly.*) Well, we shall see. Any hour now will witness my triumph. Then maybe you will be sorry yet—yes? It is almost completed—almost completed.

MRS. HEINIE (*impatiently*). What is almost completed?

HERMAN (*shaking head wisely*). Ach, that is for me to know and you to find out yet.

MRS. HEINIE. Stuff and nonsense! That's all I've heard for the past six months. You've been shaking your head and acting mysteriously for weeks. And what's the result? Every day we get nearer the poor house. And then there's Tommy. *Your* Tommy. Thank goodness none of my blood flows in his veins. (*Starts to exit.*)

HERMAN. Say, you don't seem to be much stuck on anybody about here, do you?

MRS. HEINIE. Never you mind my likes and dislikes. Now I've talked all I'm going to. Do you hear me; all I'm going to. (*Starts exit.*)

HERMAN. I am pleased to hear it.

MRS. HEINIE (*comes back*). I shall do something else besides talk. (*Starts exit.*)

HERMAN. Thank the Lord she's going.

MRS. HEINIE (*comes back*). Tomorrow—

HERMAN (*aside*). Ach, she's back again.

MRS. HEINIE. Tomorrow will be too late. It will be too late to talk, for I shall be gone.

HERMAN (*aside*). Ach, Gott! She won't go till tomorrow. (*Drops wearily into a chair.*)

MRS. HEINIE. One final word. (HERMAN *sinks deeper in chair.*) Just one final word. If another week rolls by and you do not accomplish something, I shall pack up and get out. That's all. One more week. (*Exit R.*)

HERMAN (*laughs quietly*). Ach, she's mad all over yet. (*Looks cunningly all about.*) They all think it's impossible—it can't be done yet. Well, let them think so. When my day comes my triumph will be all the more yet bigger. (*Rises, looks cautiously about, laughs weirdly.*) Ha, ha, ha! We shall see! We shall see! (*Makes circuit of stage, peering about as if to make certain he is alone. Stops back C.*) Now we shall see! See what I have hidden from all the world. My Masterpiece! The eighth wonder of the world! (*Turns back to audience and faces cabinet.*) Appear, oh my beautiful being. Appear!

(*All stage lights are turned off, spot light is thrown on cabinet, the curtains are drawn and CLARICE, as the doll, is disclosed.*)

HERMAN. Aha! So! It is sublime! A perfect Masterpiece! (*Rubs hands delightedly and chuckles.*) See! Look! It all but breathes. And I—I the good-for-nothing, will soon discover the spark of life, and then *it* will breathe, walk, eat, sleep, talk—ah, but not too much talk—just a little. She shall make my boy a fond and loving wife. Not a wife like mine—*no!* There! I have feasted these old eyes of mine long enough on you, my Masterpiece. Farewell! Perhaps when next I behold thee—ah, who then shall call me good-for-nothing? Go! (*Waves hands, spotlight out, curtains drawn and stage lights full on.*)

Enter TOOTS, R. She carries a water pail and a large sponge.

TOOTS. Say, Mr. Heinie—

HERMAN (*whirling about, facing her, suspiciously*). Aha, you have been spying on me—yes? You saw something?

TOOTS. Naw, I ain't done nothin'. I just came in to ask you if you didn't think it was about time you was payin' me seventy or eighty-five cents on my wages account.

HERMAN. What? You want money? Wages?

TOOTS. Well, I was thinkin' that if you had any money locked up in the house, it was about time you let it out to play.

HERMAN (*sadly*). My child, I have no money—*now*. (*Eagerly*.) But soon—ah, very soon there will be plenty. Be patient, my child; be patient. It won't be so very long. Pretty soon it comes in now. (*Crosses to R.*) In the meantime, don't work too hard. Sit down and rest yourself, my child. I will work for you, for everybody. I will work for my boy—my innocent boy, my darling! (*Exit R.*)

TOOTS (*flops in chair, still holding sponge and pail*). Sit down and rest? Say, that's the easiest thing I do besides eat. As for his money, I can get along without it. I can get along, but of course I ain't sayin' how far I'll get.

Enter TOMMY L. Starts to cross to R., sees TOOTS, goes up behind her and puts both hands over her eyes.

TOMMY. Guess who it is, Toots.

TOOTS (*hesitates*). Er—oh, Bud Barlow.

TOMMY (*surprised*). What? Say, has that fellow been hangin' around you makin' love?

TOOTS. Gee whillikins!

TOMMY (*kisses her*). Know who 'tis now?

TOOTS. It's Tommy Tucker. That is, it kisses like him.

TOMMY (*releases her*). Gee, I had you guessin' all right.

TOOTS (*aside*). This is the darling angel child Mr. Heinie was just ravin' about.

TOMMY (*feeling of his left arm*). Say, do you know what?

TOOTS. No—what?

TOMMY. I got vaccinated today. Was you ever vaccinated?

TOOTS. Sure I was.

TOMMY. Where was you vaccinated?

TOOTS. In Boston.

TOMMY. Oh, smarty cat!

TOOTS (*takes sponge from pail and places it in a chair*). Say, Tommy, we're all goin' to have a lot of money pretty soon.

TOMMY. Who said so?

TOOTS. I said so. Sit down and I'll tell you all about it. (TOMMY *sits on sponge*.) Your father just told me to order my weddin' gowns and such.

TOMMY. Who you goin' to marry?

TOOTS. You.

TOMMY. You're takin' a whole lot on yourself, I must say. (*Stops to break off speech slowly as he feels water on his trousers.*)

TOOTS (*pause*). Were you sayin' somethin', Tommy?

TOMMY (*comedy expression on face and squirming about on chair*). Yes, I was sayin' somethin', but—but I changed my mind.

TOOTS. I don't care to do all the talkin'.

TOMMY (*rises, shakes first one leg, then the other*). I don't mind you talkin'. (*Pulls at seat of trousers.*) I—I rather like to hear you talk.

TOOTS. You know, Tommy, you act mighty queer sometimes.

TOMMY. Well, I guess you would, too, if—(*looks slowly around and discovers sponge on chair. Silly laugh.*) Oh, gosh!

TOOTS (*looks at sponge, rises, picks up pail and sponge*). Guess I better go and water the chickens. (*Starts to cross to L.*)

TOMMY. Guess you ain't got no water. I got it all.

TOOTS. Come on, Tommy. Help me with the chickens. (*At door L.*)

TOMMY. I don't want to.

TOOTS. Why not?

TOMMY. There's a hen out there layin' for me. (*Crosses to L.*)

TOOTS. Oh, come on. Don't be afraid. I'm with you.

TOMMY. All right. But if you let me get hurt, my paw will scold you. (*They exeunt L.*)

Enter PECK from R. He looks curiously all about.

PECK. Well, this is strange. I've been all over this house and there doesn't seem to be anybody in. I came clear from Boston to serve legal papers on Mr. Herman Heinie, and serve I will or know the reason why. I'll go back and try again. (*Exit R.*)

Enter TOMMY and TOOTS, L.

TOMMY. Look here, Toots, I don't want you following me about all the time.

TOOTS. I ain't followin' you. I'm too much of a lady to do that. You got scart of the roosters and run, so I followed you to see that you got home all right.

TOMMY (*silly laugh*). You make me laugh, Toots Snodgrass. You ain't no lady. A lady has fine clothes and a lot of paint on her face. I know, 'cause I seen a lady once in a opera house show performance.

TOOTS. Was it a regular opera house theater performance?

TOMMY. Sure it was. A regular opera house, theater, academy of music performance.

TOOTS. What did she do?

TOMMY. I'll show you.

(*Introduce specialty for TOMMY and TOOTS.*)

After specialty, enter HERMAN, R.

HERMAN. Oh, so you two are together agin—yes? You are talking nonsense, maybe, or love? Anyhow, there ain't much difference.

TOMMY (*bashfully, hanging head*). Well, pop, not peractly. But Toots kinder likes me and I kinder likes Toots. And maybe some day Toots and me will get married.

HERMAN (*looking from one to the other*). So?

TOMMY. Yes, pop. What do you think of marriage, pop? (*Loud crash off R., followed by angry voice of Mrs. HEINIE.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*off R.*). Drat the luck! There goes three of my best dishes. That all comes of marrying a man who can't afford to maintain proper servants. (*Comedy business by all three during crash and her speech.*)

HERMAN. I think, Tommy, after that, I am under no obligations to explanation. (*All shake heads sadly. HERMAN glances cautiously about.*) Listen, my children. The fame of my Masterpiece has traveled far and near. I have just received word of warning that bad men have plotted to steal it. We must be careful and guard it with our lives. Already I have seen a strange man and his eyes looking suspiciously at this house. You must not let him in. You must chase him away if he tries to come in. Do you understand?

TOOTS (*glancing nervously about*). Dear me suds! What next?

TOMMY (*glances about nervously*). Oh, gosh! (*Silly laugh.*)

HERMAN (*to TOOTS*). Miss Snodgrass, you will kindly please go get acquainted with some work yet. I have something to speak over with Tommy. And as for that marriage question between you and Tommy, I am not choking with enthusiasm over it. Tommy is not for you. Go!

TOOTS (*crosses to door R., turns*). Humph! I ain't so crazy 'bout your darling Tommy. And as for work—it can't be done, not by me. (*Exit R.*)

HERMAN (*mysteriously*). Tommy, my boy, you have disclosed the wish to me that you desire to marry. I have no objections. In fact, I am in favor of it yet.

TOMMY. Toots, pop?

HERMAN. No. Far from Toots. One who is far prettier; one that is everything that could be desired in a wife. (*Glances cautiously about.*) Not like your step-mother, Tommy; no, siree.

TOMMY. Gosh, no!

HERMAN. Far be it. The one I have chosen for you is not yet.

TOMMY. Not yet what?

HERMAN. Not yet living, my child.

TOMMY. Say, I don't want a dead one for a wife.

HERMAN. Hush, my child. She will shortly be alive. The most beautiful—the most innocent—the most perfect wife you will have—ach, I can't say it!

TOMMY. Then write it, pop. Is she purtier than Toots?

HERMAN (*laughs*). Ach, child, Mother Nature has fashioned many beautiful women, but I—I have beaten her at her own game. My boy, I have—

(*Knock on door L.*)

TOMMY (*eagerly*). Is that her, pop?

HERMAN (*anxiously*). Hush, my boy. We must be very careful. (*Crosses to door L., opens it.*)

Enter PECK, briskly, hat in hand.

PECK. I beg your pardon—

HERMAN (*agitated, aside*). 'Tis he—come to steal my Masterpiece!

PECK. I begged your pardon once, but I guess you didn't get it. Is this the residence of Mr. Herman Heinie, celebrated maker of mechanical figures?

HERMAN. I do not answer. Go! (*Points at L.*)

PECK. But, my dear sir. But—

HERMAN (*interrupting*). Do not attempt to enter. Go! Go before I do you an injury.

TOMMY. Yes. Beat it.

PECK. But, my dear sir, permit me to—

HERMAN (*seizes PECK and forces him toward door L.*). I do not wish to listen to you. Go! (*Thrusts him through door and shuts it tightly. Turns to TOMMY.*) You see? It is but what I feared yet. The man with the eyes looking suspiciously. The thief! (*Displays agitation.*)

TOMMY. Say, I'll tell you, pop. I'll go call my step-mother. He won't never come back if he sees her.

HERMAN. No, no, my child. That man's visit merely serves to force me to hasten my preparations. What I do must be done at once, otherwise that man will steal the fruits of all my great labor.

TOMMY. What do you mean, pop?

HERMAN. I cannot stop to explain now, Tommy. Later you shall see and know all. Come. You must stay close to my side. Make haste. (*He drags TOMMY off C.*)

Enter PECK, L., and TOOTS, R.

PECK (*bowing politely*). I really beg your pardon—

TOOTS (*aside, with agitation*). Gosh—the robber!

PECK. Young woman, is this the residence of Mr. Herman Heinie?

TOOTS. Who wants to know?

PECK. I do. I've been wanting to know for some time, now.

TOOTS. Well, you git right out of here now—

PECK. But, my dear young lady. But—

TOOTS. Don't you dare "but" me. When I tell you to git, you git. (*Grabs broom, beats him with it and forces him off L. They exeunt.*)

Enter BUD and CLARICE. He is dressed as MEPHISTO and she as the life-sized doll. He carries crank in one hand and fastens it on her back.

BUD. Now you are all set to crank up. But don't feel cranky.

CLARICE. Oh, Bud, how can you joke about this?

BUD. Everything so far is immense—just as I had it planned. Say, how do I look? (*Whirls about for her inspection.*)

CLARICE. You look like the—ahem! You look the part all right. And I? (*Poses for him.*)

BUD (*kisses her*). That's the answer.

CLARICE. Oh, Bud Barlow! You mustn't do that. (*Puckers up her lips for more.*)

BUD (*laughs*). Well, I suppose while I have the chance I might just as well fatten up my batting average. (*Kisses*

her two or three times.) There! That ought to have me leading the league for a few days, anyhow. . . . Now, the idea is, my dear, that I must find a way to introduce myself to your uncle.

CLARICE. Oh, please be careful, Bud. His heart may be weak.

BUD. Don't worry. I'll be careful. Hush! Someone is coming. We must hide. (*Grabs her and runs about the stage two or three times seeking a hiding place.*)

Enter PECK, L. Starts in surprise at seeing a MEPHISTO and doll.

PECK. Oh, excuse me—the Devil!

BUD (*whirling about on PECK, striking Mephisto attitude, with forefinger pointed*). Aha, aha! What means this unwarranted intrusion? Go! Go before I summon my—my fiendish—(*aside to CLARICE*). I'm stuck. What shall I say next?

CLARICE (*prompts him*). Summon my fiendish hirelings to drag you to the depths below. (*PECK stares in amazement from one to the other.*)

BUD (*to CLARICE, aside*). Sounds great. I'll try it on him. (*To PECK.*) Fly, before I summon my fiendish depths to drag—to drag you—you to my—to drag you to my hired men below.

PECK. Well, of all the foolish nonsense!

BUD (*drops Mephisto manner*). Say, kiddo, you get out of here, and do it quick. Understand that. (*Threatens PECK.*)

PECK (*retreats toward L.*). Yes, I hear and understand. I go, but I want it distinctly understood that I shall return. (*Looks curiously at them and exits L.*)

CLARICE (*laughingly*). Wonder who that chap is?

BUD (*laughingly*). He's probably wondering the same of us. Now don't worry. I'm on the job.

CLARICE (*nervously*). I'm not worrying, but—but my feet are getting chilly. (*Tries to pull skirts down.*)

BUD. Don't get cold feet now. Hush! Somebody else coming.

HERMAN (*off R.*). Now, Tommy, my boy, everything is nearly ready yet. Come with me and I shall bring her to life.

CLARICE (*looking anxiously about*). Oh, Bud—he's coming.

BUD (*nervously*). Yes, yes—leave it all to me. (*He grabs her and they run about stage looking for hiding places—under the table, back of sofa, etc. At last he runs her to the cabinet, opens curtains and thrusts her inside, pulling curtains to after her.*)

CLARICE (*inside cabinet*). But, I'm so nervous.

BUD. Shut up. Don't even breathe till I tell you. As for me, I don't know *where* I'm going to light. (*Discovers fireplace.*) Aha! The very thing. It's me for the merry old chimney. (*Hides in fireplace.*)

Enter HERMAN and TOMMY, R. HERMAN carries package of flashlight powder. Looks all about to see if coast is clear.

HERMAN. It is all right, Tommy. We are alone. The propitious moment has arrived. Now for the crowning triumph of my life.

TOMMY. Say, pop, you make my backbone feel cold.

HERMAN. Hush, my child. Soon you shall see her—a damsel as fair and as beautiful as Venus, and who lacks nothing but life to make her perfect.

TOMMY. Say, pop, you ain't off your nanny, are you?

HERMAN (*weird laugh*). Oho! They all think I'm crazy, Tommy. See! I shall show you. *Look! Look!*

(*Curtains of cabinet are drawn. CLARICE, as doll, is disclosed with spotlight on her. HERMAN stands with outstretched hand pointing at her.*)

TOMMY. Gosh, all Friday, pop, but she's a peach! (CLARICE *makes a wry face at TOMMY.*) Oh, look, pop; she's makin' goo-goo faces at me.

HERMAN. Nonsense, child. Hush! The moment has arrived when by the power of this magic powder I shall summon His Majesty from Hades and will endow my wonderful doll with the spark of life.

TOMMY. Hold on, pop. Who did you say was comin'?

HERMAN (*impatiently*). The Devil, my boy—the Devil.

TOMMY. We'll have a hot time in the old town tonight, won't we?

HERMAN. Hush, I say—don't talk. Now I am ready. But where shall I place my magic powder? (*Looks about.*) Ah, yes—the fireplace. The fireplace is just the place for the Devil. He'll feel at home in there. (*Places powder in fireplace, then feels in his pocket for a match.*)

CLARICE (*wildly from cabinet, aside*). Gracious goodness! He'll blow poor Bud sky high.

TOMMY (*shivering with fright*). Oh, I smell brimstone four feet thick.

HERMAN (*with match, stooping over powder*). Hush, you will spoil it all. Now, King Pluto, I, Herman Heinie, command you to appear. (*Lights match and ignites powder. BUD jumps from fireplace and strikes an attitude in C. Red floodlight is thrown on him.*)

TOMMY (*on knees with fright*). Gosh, Mister Devil, please be good. Don't take me; take pop. He's about all in anyhow.

BUD (*to TOMMY*). Silence, slave! (*To HERMAN.*) Well you have sent for me and I am come. (*Aside.*) That sounds like the Devil I think.

HERMAN. Yes, yes, Your Highness. But it didn't take you so long as I expected to come from—from your home. (*Rubs hands together in his delight.*)

BUD. No, not long. I travel fast. I'm a scorcher. Ha, ha! I must have my joke, you know.

TOMMY. Ha, ha!

BUD (*turning on TOMMY fiercely*). Silence! (*TOMMY yells and falls to floor.*)

HERMAN. Your Highness, I cannot thank you—

BUD (*interrupting*). I am a busy man, and now that I am come, what is your command? Remember, this is my busy day.

TOMMY. Well, don't let us keep you from any other engagement. We're in no hurry, you know.

HERMAN. Hush, Tommy. Permit me to talk to His Highness. (*To BUD.*) Your Highness, I have never had the pleasure of meeting you before; but I've heard of you many, many times.

BUD (*impatiently*). Come, come—don't keep me waiting. I have a lot to do today. There are lots of people who are not satisfied with this world, so I'm going to show them where I live.

HERMAN (*bows gravely*). Sire, I have sent for you to give life to—to yonder beautiful doll. Look, Sire. (*Points at doll.*)

BUD (*turning, looking at doll and forgetting his part*). Say, she is a pippin, isn't she? (*Remembering his role, quickly.*) So, that is your desire, eh? Well, I shall grant your wish upon one condition—one condition only. And that is, that your soul becomes mine after your death. (*HERMAN staggers weakly back.*)

TOMMY. You might as well say yes, pop. He'll get you some day anyhow.

HERMAN. Your Highness, I consent. (*Bows low.*)

BUD. Swear it!

HERMAN. I do—solemnly do, Your Highness. (*Raises right hand.*)

BUD. Good! Now shall I give life to your beautiful creation. (*BUD goes to front of cabinet, makes hypnotic passes at her. As he slowly backs away she follows him, moving as though in a trance. Music plays a dreamy waltz and BUD and CLARICE waltz about stage for several moments, BUD finally waltzing from stage, L. door, and leaving CLARICE at C. in rigid attitude, doll-like. HERMAN and TOMMY go to her and examine her closely.*)

HERMAN (*puzzled*). Tommy, my boy, I can't understand this yet. She waltzes with the Devil, now she's a doll again, and don't move yet.

TOMMY. Pop, I think you got a bum steer. He did a bum job. You better send for a plumber.

HERMAN. No, no, my boy; it must be all right. It can't go wrong now; it can't go wrong now.

TOMMY. Pop, I think she needs winding up again. (*Discovers clock work on her back, winds it. Effect of winding sound can be produced from the wings with a ratchet. CLARICE moves one arm in jerky manner.*) Oh, look, pop; look. You got to crank her like a automobilly goat.

HERMAN (*sadly*). Ach, that is too bad. She is not perfect yet; she is not perfect yet.

TOMMY. No, pop, she ought to have a self-starter. (*He winds and CLARICE gradually assumes a lifelike posture.*)

CLARICE (*slowly coming to life, rubbing hands over eyes*). Oh, where am I?

TOMMY (*jumping about in glee*). See, pop, see! She's all right, and she's a woman, too, all right.

HERMAN. How do you know she is a woman, Tommy?

TOMMY. 'Cause the first thing she does is ask a question.

CLARICE. Oh, please, sir, tell me where I am.

HERMAN. Peace, my child. You are with friends.

TOMMY. Sure. I'm your friend all right. (*Chucks her under the chin.*)

HERMAN. Now, Tommy, don't get fresh by her.

CLARICE. How strange I feel. It seems as though I had been in this room before. And your face—(*to HERMAN*)—I know I have seen it sometime—somewhere. (*To TOMMY.*) And yours—(*breaks into a hearty laugh*). Your face—ha, ha, ha! It is too funny.

TOMMY (*meanwhile has been laughing at HERMAN, now realizes that she is making fun of him*). Aw, now you stop!

CLARICE. It seems so like a dream, and yet—

HERMAN. Yes, yes, child. Some day you shall know all about it. Today is not yet the time yet. Go with Tommy. Go into the garden with him. He has much to teach you. You have much to learn. I got to stay here myself alone yet and think it over. It is all too wonderful to believe. Go, Tommy!

TOMMY (*taking CLARICE's hand*). Come out in the garden and I'll start you off with a couple of lessons. (*Leads her toward L. door.*)

HERMAN (*warningly*). Careful, Tommy—don't stub your

toe. (CLARICE and TOMMY *laugh*. CLARICE *suddenly assumes a rigid, doll-like attitude*.)

TOMMY. Gosh, pop, she's stalled again.

HERMAN. Wind her up, Tommy; wind her up. (TOMMY *operates crank on her back and she regains gradually a life-like, natural attitude*.)

TOMMY. Say, doll, there ain't no use tryin' to teach you anything if your system's goin' to run down every few minutes.

CLARICE (*at door L.*). Oh, I feel better now.

TOMMY (*holding CLARICE'S hand—to HERMAN*). Say, pop, you made me a peach of a wife.

HERMAN (*rubs hands delightedly together*). Yes, yes, my boy; I know, I know.

TOMMY. Then you'd better get busy and make *yourself* a new one—you need one all right. (TOMMY and CLARICE *exeunt L., laughingly*.)

HERMAN (*gazing curiously all about room*). Ach, it is all so strange—so wonderful! It is hard to realize my triumph. Maybe yet I ain't alive any more. That's it. I died and went to heaven. (*Pauses in meditative manner*.) No. No, that can't be, either. I saw the Devil. He was shoost here. The Devil wouldn't be in heaven. Heaven is the only place where dreams come true, they say. And—(*scratches head reflectively*) and my dream did come true. But I can't be in heaven, because the Devil—ach, I got it. This must be hell. (*Sits at dining-table, thoughtful pose*.) I wonder if it really is? (*Loud crash off R., followed by MRS. HEINIE'S voice*.)

MRS. HEINIE (*off R.*). Of all the shiftless creatures, Toots Snodgrass, you're the worst. Go tell that good-for-nothing master of yours that I want to talk to him—talk to him—understand?

HERMAN (*nods his head wisely, sighs*). Yah, this is hell all right.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE: *Same as Act I. Late afternoon, same day.*

At rise, enter PECK, cautiously, L. Glances fearfully all about.

PECK. Ah, nobody here again. Well, as there doesn't seem to be any kick coming this time, I believe I'll make another attempt to see Mr. Heinie. Lord, but I've had a time of it this day. And I'm *so* hungry. (*Sighs.*) I wonder what the chances are of getting a bite to eat.

MRS. HEINIE (*off R.*). Herman Heinie, where are you?

PECK (*frightened*). Oh, Lord—that woman again. She mustn't see me. (*Looks about for a hiding place, discovers cabinet, runs to it, enters and closes curtains after him.*)

Enter MRS. HEINIE, R. Looks suspiciously all about.

MRS. HEINIE. Humph! I never did see anything like this in all my life—never! Can't find anybody I want to find to talk to. And when a woman in my position in life can't talk, things have indeed come to a pretty pass. (*Looks all about.*) There's something mighty mysterious going on in this house. I don't seem to be in on the secrets, but I'm going to be in or I'll know the reason why. (*Looks at cabinet.*) There's that closet thing. Herman Heinie has something locked up in there, and I'm going to see it—now that I have a chance. (*Starts for cabinet, then stops.*) No, I won't. I'm no spy. (*Hesitates.*) I'm no spy—but I'm terribly curious. I guess if I took just one little peek nobody would be the wiser. And, oh, I know I'd feel ever so much better. So here goes! (*She runs to cabinet, parts curtains, disclosing PECK. Picture for a moment. MRS. HEINIE screams, PECK jumps from cabinet, MRS. HEINIE falls on her knees.*)

PECK. Madam, I beg your pardon! I—I really—

MRS. HEINIE. Oh, Mr. Robber, spare my life—spare my life!

PECK. Certainly, madam. I don't want your life. Not on your life!

MRS. HEINIE. Then please spare my money. I haven't any, but please spare it anyhow. I am only a poor, weak woman who has married beneath her station in life—

PECK (*interrupting*). Rise, woman, rise! (*Lifts her to her feet.*) Did I understand you to say that you were married?

MRS. HEINIE (*sighs*). I am, sir.

PECK. Who would ever believe it? So young, so fair, so beautiful! (*Sighs tenderly.*)

MRS. HEINIE. Of all the people I ever came in contact with, you are the most candid, likewise the most unbiased. What a wonderful judge of human nature you are. (*Smirks at him.*)

PECK. I dare say. But I am wasting time—

MRS. HEINIE. Sir!

PECK (*bows humbly*). Pray, don't misunderstand me, madam. But I came here on business—not pleasure. (*Bows again.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*pleased*). Oh, thank you, sir. (*Bows.*)

PECK. I came to see Mr. Herman Heinie. Would you mind trying to locate him—I don't seem to be able to. I have a most important business matter to present to him.

MRS. HEINIE. I'm sure I can't imagine what important business matter Herman Heinie could have with anybody. However, to do *you* a favor, I shall try to find him at once. I said I would try to find him at once.

PECK. Yes, I got you the first time, thank you.

MRS. HEINIE. If you will remain here I shall go immediately and try to find him. Go immediately and try to find him. I shall be pleased to see you again, sir. (*Starts for R.*) I said I shall be pleased to see you again, sir. (*Exit R.*)

PECK. Humph! That woman can't think of things to say quick enough, so she repeats what she's said before. This is certainly a most extraordinary household—most extraordinary.

BUD (*off L.*). Come on, dearie. Here I am; this way.

PECK (*looking wildly about*). Oh, Lord! Here comes that fellow with the husky kick. I must make myself scarce. (*Looks all about, then runs and hides under table, the cloth covering him.*)

Enter BUD and CLARICE, *L.* *He is in Mephisto and she in doll costume.*

BUD. Ah, there's nobody here. That's good.

PECK (*sticks head out from under table*). He's a liar, but I am in no position to tell him so.

CLARICE. Do you think, Bud, that everything is coming along all right?

BUD. Immense. But, say, I've got an idea. Suppose we have something to eat—just you and I.

CLARICE. That's a good idea. What shall we have?

BUD. Oh, just anything at all. Suppose you cook something, eh?

CLARICE. Well, I'm not much of a cook.

BUD. I'll take a chance.

CLARICE. But I've got a good cook book. Say, I have it. We'll get the book and try cooking something from it.

BUD. Try? (*Doubtfully.*) Say, I'm really hungry, you know.

CLARICE (*gets cook book from small table, brings it back to table, turns over leaves.*) Now, let's see. Here's a recipe for angel food.

BUD (*laughs*). Well, would that be just the thing for me?

CLARICE. What more befitting food would you ask, Your Highness?

BUD. Nothing but a lady kiss. (*Kisses her. PECK peeks out and makes a wry face.*)

CLARICE. If you don't behave you'll have to get a new cook. (*Gets large spoon, pan and dish from sideboard, brings them to table.*) You know, Bud, you must help. (*She goes to sideboard again. BUD, with arm about her, goes with her.*)

BUD (*looking in sideboard*). What the deuce do they put

in angel food, anyhow? Here's vinegar, catsup, shoe polish—no, no; of course not. Brandy? Gasoline?

CLARICE. Here, takes this and don't stand there like a ninny. (*She hands him package of flour, he takes it to table. She takes two eggs and brings them to table.*).

BUD (*surveying things doubtfully*). Now, I suppose the idea is to get those things together in some way.

CLARICE. Yes, they must be gotten together—somehow.

BUD. Let's see what the good cook book says. (*Reads from book.*) "Put into one tumbler of flour one teaspoonful of cream of tartar, then sift it five times." That's easy. But where's your cream of tartar?

CLARICE (*goes to sideboard, gets can, comes back*). Here we are.

BUD (*looking at can*). Why, that's mustard.

CLARICE (*pouting*). Well, that's the nearest thing we have to cream of tartar.

BUD. Oh, that's near enough, dearie. Don't look so hurt. (*Dumps it into pan.*) Now what's next? (*Looks in book. Reads.*) "Beat to a froth the whites of eleven eggs." Say, that's cruelty, you know. I'm not going to beat up a lot of eggs if I never eat.

CLARICE. Oh, go ahead. You can't afford to be so tender-hearted. Here's the eggs. (*Holds out two eggs.*)

BUD. Only two? It says eleven here.

CLARICE. Well, two are all we have.

BUD. Oh, I get the idea. I'll beat the two eggs twenty-two times. That ought to be the same thing.

CLARICE (*admiringly*). Bud, you missed your vocation. You should have been a cook.

BUD. Oh, one can do most anything if they have to. Now then, chuck in the flour. (*CLARICE pours flour in pan. BUD stirs it, dips out a spoonful. PECK puts out head to see what is going on, and BUD lets spoonful drop on his head.*) You know, dear, I can taste this already.

PECK (*furiously wiping off concoction*). So can I.

CLARICE. It's going to be good all right.

BUD. Now in go the eggs. (*Breaks eggs and throws shells and all into flour.*)

CLARICE. Now, Bud, you've made your first mistake.

BUD (*anxiously*). How? What mistake?

CLARICE. You didn't beat your eggs.

BUD. Humph! Leave it to me. I'll beat the living shucks out of 'em. (*Grabs spoon and vigorously begins to stir flour, which flies all about.*)

CLARICE (*coughing, choking, etc.*). Bud, Bud, stop!

PECK (*coughs loudly*). Oh, Lord!

BUD (*business of searching and finally discovers PECK, brings him out by one ear*). Oh, look. Here's another cook. Too many cooks spoil the angel food.

PECK. I beg your pardon—

BUD. Oh, no, you won't. You'll get out of here and do it quick. (*Runs PECK out of door L., PECK holding back and loudly protesting.*)

CLARICE. Well, of all things. How did that man get in under that table?

BUD. Don't know how he got *under*, but I've an idea how he got *out*. (*Looks at pan of flour, scratches head doubtfully.*) I don't see much there in the way of success, do you?

CLARICE. No, it's doubtful. We'll have to try something else.

BUD. All right. (*Kisses her.*)

CLARICE. You mustn't do that, Bud. Somebody might come in while you are doing that. We must be careful.

BUD (*with arm about her waist*). You're right, sweetheart. We must be very careful. (*Kisses her.*)

Enter HERMAN from R.

HERMAN (*falling back in astonishment*). Oh, excuse me—I didn't know—

BUD. Oh, that's all right. (*Retaining her hand and taking out his watch.*)

CLARICE (*aside to BUD*). There! The mischief is done.

BUD (*to HERMAN*). You see, Mr. Heinie, I am merely

taking the young woman's pulse to determine whether or not her circulation is normal.

HERMAN. By golly, has she got a pulse yet?

BUD. Has she got a pulse? It's doing a hundred and fifty right now.

HERMAN. So? Why, dots exceeding de speed limit.

BUD. I guess Tommy wound her up too tight.

CLARICE. Tommy thinks I'm an alarm clock.

BUD. By the way, Mr. Heinie, is your wife about? I should like to meet her.

HERMAN (*comedy expression on face*). You—you should like to meet my wife?

BUD. Certainly. Is there any reason why I shouldn't?

HERMAN (*chuckles*). No, Your Highness. On the contrary, there is every reason in the world why you should. Wait, I shall be very glad to inform her that the Devil wants her. (*Bows and exits R.*)

CLARICE. Oh, Bud, if she should recognize us. I tremble at the thought.

BUD. Don't do any trembling while Bud's on the job.

Enter PECK, L. Woe-begone manner.

PECK. I beg your pardon—

BUD. Say, are you here yet or again?

PECK. I told you I would return. When does the masquerade take place?

BUD. Say, this is the second time you've butted in here.

PECK. Young man, you're a poor mathematician. You haven't kept a very good account of my buttin'-ins. I'm getting awfully tired, too. I can't get a hearing. Besides, take a look at my coat. (*Turns and exhibits large tear in back of coat.*) A crazy girl with a broom did that.

CLARICE. Poor man!

BUD. Poor nothing! (*To PECK.*) Now you get out of here—quick!

PECK. But, my dear sir—

BUD. But nothing. And don't butt in here again—understand? (*Runs PECK out door L.*)

CLARICE. Gracious! Wonder who he can be?

BUD. Don't know—don't care. Just now we have other business on hand. PECK *re-enter L.*

PECK. I go, but I'll see you later. (*Exit L.*)

Enter HERMAN and MRS. HEINIE, R.

HERMAN. Your Highness—

MRS. HEINIE (*interrupting with a scream*). What on earth is this?

HERMAN. Calm yourself, my dear. It is only the Devil.

MRS. HEINIE. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! This all comes in marrying a man so far beneath you in social standing. But it is all a joke. It can't be really and truly—

HERMAN (*pompously*). My dear, permit me to introduce to you his most august Majesty—the Devil! Mr. Devil, Mrs. Heinie.

BUD (*with outstretched hand*). Delighted to meet you, I am sure.

MRS. HEINIE (*taking his hand nervously*). I'm—I'm—

HERMAN (*aside*). By golly! She's almost speechless.

MRS. HEINIE (*pointing at CLARICE*). And that—that person. Who is she?

CLARICE (*indignantly*). Person! How dare you, madam!

BUD (*aside to CLARICE*). Now, now; easy on the rough stuff.

HERMAN. She's another surprise for you, my dear.

MRS. HEINIE. Humph! She looks like a ballet dancer.

HERMAN (*clearing his throat*). Ahem, my dear. You do not understand. Can't you guess—can't you see? It is she—my Masterpiece. Endowed with life.

MRS. HEINIE. What! Nonsense! Impossible!

BUD. It is true, my dear madam. Your husband is a genius. And *you*, most gracious of women, must surely have been the inspiration for his wonderful art.

MRS. HEINIE (*smiles, flattered*). Oh, Your Majesty, (*Bows.*)

HERMAN (*to BUD*). Nay, nay, Your Highness. The credit belongs most to you yet.

MRS. HEINIE. Yes, I'll warrant you it does. You never were any account and never will be. I said, you never were any account and never will be. (*Suddenly.*) But look at your Masterpiece. (*CLARICE has meantime assumed a rigid attitude. BUD operates crank and she gradually returns to life again.*)

CLARICE. Madam, you do your noble husband an injustice. He is a grand and wonderful man.

MRS. HEINIE. Humph! I don't think much of you as a critic. I said, I don't think much of you as a critic. Somebody has to wind you up every little while.

HERMAN. They don't have to you, my dear. (*To MRS. HEINIE.*) But aside from all this, if it were not for me you would never have had the opportunity of being introduced to royalty. (*Indicates BUD.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*gushingly*). Oh, I have long dreamed of that exquisite pleasure, but I had the great misfortune to marry beneath my *real* station in life, consequently—

BUD (*interrupting*). Say no more, madam. One can see that at a glance. (*Throws a meaning look at HERMAN.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*smiling and smirking at BUD*). Oh, Your Highness; you flatter me.

TOOTS *enters from R., stands at back C., watching scene closely.*

BUD (*to MRS. HEINIE*). And now, madam, with your permission, I am going to ask your husband to have his wonderful doll dance for our entertainment.

MRS. HEINIE (*graciously*). I am quite sure that you know what is best, Your Highness. (*Looks scornfully at HERMAN.*)

(*CLARICE introduces a song and dance specialty.*)

BUD (*to MRS. HEINIE, after specialty*). Come, my dear lady. Permit me to offer you my arm, and we will stroll in the garden. (*He bows gallantly, she takes his arm and they walk slowly toward door L.*) You and I have much in common, dear lady.

MRS. HEINIE (*at door L.*). Oh, Your Majesty. You are so delightful.

BUD. Come, let us stroll. (*They exeunt L.*)

HERMAN (*following them to door*). Yes—and keep on strolling. (*Turns to CLARICE.*) My wife has found her affinity at last. (*Chuckles.*)

CLARICE (*indignantly*). If he thinks I'm going to stand for that, I'll show him. (*Stamps foot.*)

HERMAN (*to CLARICE*). No, no, my dear. You are not for him. Fate has decreed that you shall wed my boy, Tommy.

TOOTS, at back C., now for the first time moves. Places a hand on her heart and almost faints.

CLARICE (*to HERMAN*). What? Me marry that brainless, freckle-faced, knock-kneed, loose-jointed, overgrown, country lout of a bumpkin?

HERMAN. Well, aside of the few things you have mentioned, he's a nice boy, ain't he?

CLARICE. I don't want to marry anybody. (*Cries.*) I hate—hate everybody. I'm going back and be a doll again. I'm—I'm—

HERMAN (*soothingly*). There, there. You mustn't cry. Everything will be all right yet. You have already been alive a few moments yet, and you are crying already. Wait till you have been in this old world a few years yet, and then maybe you will find plenty to cry about. (*Pats her hand tenderly.*) Come; come with me. We'll take a walk on the outside and look at God's sunshine, His flowers and His trees, and we'll listen to His birds sing. You know, I ain't the only one that makes nice things. God makes 'em, too. Yes, my child. God makes some awfully nice things. (*They exeunt L., his arm around her.*)

TOOTS (*coming down C., stares after them in astonishment*). Well, I'll be doggoned! If this ain't a lunatical asylum, then I'm a last year's bird's nest. Now, that one man was Mr. Devil, and that female gal—where in a sixteen-acre lot did she come from?

Enter PECK, L. One eye is blackened and he presents a generally disheveled appearance.

PECK. I beg your pardon—

TOOTS. And here's another. Oh, gosh!

PECK. I say, I beg your pardon. Do you see this eye.
(*Indicates blackened eye.*)

TOOTS. Uh—uh!

PECK. Now I'm going to tell you something—

TOOTS (*interrupting*). 'Tain't no use. I'll laugh before you start.

PECK (*angrily*). This is a fine place—a fine place, I must say.

TOOTS. Say, if you ain't full of admiration for it, you can hit the long and dusty high road forthwith. And to make certain that you don't miss it, I'll herewith give you full and precise directions as to how to reach it; also a flying start. (*Comedy chase, with him going through door L., she coming back to C.*) Gosh all fish hooks! Between one thing and the next thing to it, the squirrels will be following me purty soon. Humph! Toots Snodgrass, your lovin' disposition has been spoiled. That purty gal is going to marry Tommy. That's cause I ain't got money and fine clothes. But I got a idea. That summer boarder that was here last summer and couldn't pay her board, left a lot of swell clothes. I'm a-goin' to dress up flashier than a band on a nickel see-gar; then we'll see. I ain't had much money in all my life. Once I had \$12, all at one and the same time, and the house got so full of microbes from so much money that I had to spend \$3 for powder to kill 'em off. Ever since then I've been so broke that the kids on the street stop and give me their pennies. But you just wait till I tog myself out in them fine clothes. I'll show 'em.

Enter TOMMY, R. He goes behind TOOTS.

TOMMY (*sharply*). Boo!

TOOTS (*badly frightened, falls on knees, covers face with hands*). Oh, please, good, kind Mr. Devil, don't take me—don't take me. I don't want to play in your yard.

TOMMY (*jumping about in glee*). Oh, I scart you; I scart you.

TOOTS (*looking about at him*). You never did. I knew it was you all the time, smarty. (*Rises.*) But I'm kinder

nervous today. I never did see so much goin's on, even in a circus. Say, Tommy, the Devil was here.

TOMMY. Oh, you ain't got nothin' on me. I seen him when he first came in. Besides, he's a most particular friend of mine. Pop invited him to come here and pay us a visit.

TOOTS. Gosh, sakes! He ain't a regular Devil, is he?

TOMMY. Yep. Got horns, hoofs—and gosh how he smells of brimstone—just perzactly like a match.

TOOTS (*looking around in affright*). Well, I ain't done nothin' to be ashamed of.

TOMMY. And did you see that purty gal?

TOOTS. Uh—uh!

TOMMY. That's my wife. (*Proudly strutting about.*)

TOOTS. What!

TOMMY. Well, not just now; but she's goin' ter be.

TOOTS. O, Tommy!

TOMMY. And then pop's goin' to buy me a honeymoon and a stork.

TOOTS. A honeymoon and a what?

TOMMY. A stork. Don't you know what a stork is? That's something that comes around with a long bill.

TOOTS. Oh, you mean the groceryman. But say, Tommy, you ought to hear what that purty gal called you. Why, she called you everything in the directory, from cover to cover. Said you was knock-kneed, frog-eyed, freckle-faced, skinny, bow-legged, brainless and a country bumpkin.

TOMMY. Well, maybe I am. I don't care.

TOOTS (*takes an orange from table and starts to eat it*). Well, you are all right, and she cares.

TOMMY (*tries to snatch orange*). Give me that orange. How dare you eat a orange when I want to eat a orange.

TOOTS. That ain't your orange; that's my orange. I'm goin' to eat my orange.

TOMMY. That's my orange and you can't eat my orange when I want to eat my orange.

TOOTS. Well, what'll we do? There's only one orange and there's two of us.

TOMMY. I know. The one who tells the biggest lie gets the orange.

TOOTS. All right. You start.

TOMMY. Well, one time—

Enter HERMAN, L.

HERMAN. Hello, children. What are you doing yet?

TOMMY. We're tryin' to see who gets this orange. If I tell a bigger lie than Toots, I get it, and if Toots tells a bigger lie than me, she gets it.

HERMAN. Tut, tut, children. You shouldn't tell lies. Under no circumstances is one justified in telling lies. Now. I never told a lie in all my life.

TOOTS (*to TOMMY*). Tommy, give your paw the orange. (*TOMMY gives orange to HERMAN. TOMMY and TOOTS laugh heartily and exeunt R.*)

HERMAN (*sinking wearily into chair*). Ach, I don't know what to make of that doll. Sometimes I think I ain't got yet the real spark of life. She runs down and then I got to crank her up like a auto. Shoost now in the garden I cranked her and she run away—so fast I couldn't catch her. Maybe she don't come back no more.

Enter PECK, L. His collar hangs loosely, torn from button.

PECK. I beg your pardon—

HERMAN (*excitedly, to feet*). So, 'tis you, you scoundrel. Have you seen my doll?

PECK (*wearily*). Have I seen your what?

HERMAN. My doll; my doll.

PECK. Say, do you mean to tell me that an old man like you plays with dolls?

HERMAN (*patiently*). Say, please, I am asking you—don't laugh at me—I am asking you a civilized question yet. Have you seen my doll?

PECK. I have not. And furthermore, I haven't seen your kite, your marbles or your top, or any of your other little playthings. Now I want to ask you something. Have you seen my coat? (*Turns and exhibits torn coat.*) And then

again, I want to ask you if you have seen this eye? (*Indicates blackened eye.*)

HERMAN. Ach, I care not for those things, sir.

PECK. Well, perhaps the awful condition of my linen may appeal to you. (*Indicates torn collar.*)

HERMAN. Bah! All those things are mere trifles compared to my troubles. I think I discover the spark of life which animates my Masterpiece; but, presto, I am deceived. It is not so yet. (*Rises, angrily.*) And you—you are the one who is responsible. You come to steal. I was warned, but too late. Now, go. Go bring back my doll or I shall make you trouble.

PECK (*laughs in sickly fashion*). You make me trouble? You? After showing you my coat, my eye, my linen; after going all day without a bite to eat; after getting kicked out of here a dozen times or more. You make me trouble? Bah! You can't do it.

HERMAN. Very well. I shall prove it. (*HERMAN grabs PECK and runs him off L. Returns to table, sinks in chair and buries his face in his arms.*)

Enter MRS. HEINIE, R.

MRS. HEINIE. Well, now what seems to be the matter? Have you lost all ambition?

HERMAN (*sadly*). Yes—and my doll too yet.

MRS. HEINIE. Well, I'm glad of it, for my part. (*Suddenly and looking around.*) Have you seen His Highness? Did he come in here? I seem to have lost him.

HERMAN. You lost him and I lost my doll.

MRS. HEINIE. Oh, I shall find him again, never fear.

HERMAN. *Sure* you will—some day.

MRS. HEINIE. I think, without exception, that he's the grandest man I ever met. So kind, so thoughtful, and he uses such exquisite language. (*Sighs.*) Ah, that I had only met him years ago.

HERMAN (*sadly*). I echo your wish with all my heart.

MRS. HEINIE. Oh, why couldn't you have been more like His Majesty?

HERMAN. It is true, my dear, that we are not well matched.

MRS. HEINIE. Well, whose fault is it? You've always declared that matches were made in heaven.

HERMAN. True, my dear; I said that. But in our case there must have been a mistake made in delivering the goods.

Enter BUD, L.

BUD (*to MRS. HEINIE*). Ah, my dear Mrs. Heinie, there you are. I've been searching the garden and the grounds for you. So sorry I missed you. (*Takes her hand.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*graciously*). Pray, don't apologize, Your Majesty.

BUD (*toying with her hand*). I was just commencing to thoroughly enjoy our little tête-a-tête when I was called to the long distance telephone.

HERMAN. Is—is your residence connected by phone?

BUD. Oh, yes. In fact, every phone is connected with—well, you take my word for it. In other words, you have a Halifax of a time whenever you use a phone.

MRS. HEINIE (*to BUD*). Your Highness, shall we again stroll in the garden?

BUD (*still toying with her hand*). Nothing, I assure you, dear lady, would give me more pleasure than to stroll in the garden with you.

MRS. HEINIE. Oh, how nicely you put things, Your Highness. I'm quite sure you know what is best.

HERMAN. Say, I hope I ain't intruding here?

BUD (*toying with her hand*). Oh, no; don't mind us. (*To her.*) Come. Let us go where we may be alone.

HERMAN. And stroll.

MRS. HEINIE (*at door L., with BUD*). Yes, we will go where we may be—alone. (*BUD and MRS. HEINIE exeunt L., much interested in each other.*)

HERMAN (*chuckles*). I hope he strolls so far it'll be nearer his home than mine.

CLARICE *enters R., just in time to see BUD's exit with MRS. HEINIE.*

CLARICE (*angrily*). So that is the way the wind blows, is it?

HERMAN (*eagerly*). You—you come back again. Ach, I am glad. You see those two?

CLARICE. Yes, I see those two. Do you suppose I am going to permit an affair of that kind to bud and blossom?

HERMAN. My dear, the Devil is entirely welcome to the harvest he reaps.

CLARICE (*half crying*). I'll not stand it. I'll put a stop to it. I will—so there!

Enter TOMMY, R. He carries a large horse pistol.

TOMMY. I'll fix that robber if he comes monkeying around here. (*Flourishes pistol. He and HERMAN confer aside.*)

CLARICE (*aside*). I've an idea. I'll make desperate love to Tommy. He's making love to Mrs. Heinie, and I'll just play even. (*Calls to TOMMY.*) Oh, Tommy, come here.

TOMMY. Eh?

CLARICE. Come here, you dear sweet boy. Where have you been? I've been dreadfully lonesome without you. (*Sits on table, feet swinging back and forth.*) Oh, come, now; don't be bashful. I want to talk to you.

TOMMY (*bashfully hanging back*). Oh, I don't want to.

HERMAN (*pushing TOMMY toward CLARICE*). Go on, Tommy boy. Never be out when Opportunity knocks. Opportunity in this case is a very charming girl. As for me, I go and give Opportunity a chance. (*Exits L.*)

CLARICE (*looking after HERMAN pityingly*). Poor old man. I hope we are doing the right thing. (*To TOMMY.*) Come here—sit close beside me.

TOMMY (*hanging back*). I gotta look for that robber. (*Flourishes pistol.*)

CLARICE (*startled*). Robber? What robber?

TOMMY. Why, that robber that's hangin' around here tryin' to steal you.

CLARICE (*frightened*). My gracious—

TOMMY. Oh, don't be scart—I'm here.

CLARICE (*nervously*). Yes, I know, Tommy, but—why—why should he want to steal me?

TOMMY (*silly laugh*). Gee, gosh! Any man'd like to steal a peach like you.

CLARICE (*laughingly*). Oh, you flatterer.

TOMMY. I ain't no flathead. You know, that robber thinks you're a doll yet.

CLARICE. I see. And if I were a doll and he should steal me, he could probably sell me for a lot of money.

TOMMY. Yes, of course he could. But I guess I better wind you up again. (*Turns crank on her back.*)

CLARICE (*laughs*). I'll run for a while yet. But I'm glad that I'm not a doll, Tommy—for your sake. Come here.

TOMMY (*bashful comedy walk to her. When near her he takes a pin from his coat and jabs it into the calf of her limb.*) There!

CLARICE (*screams, jumps from table, rubs ankle, etc.*). Oh, you bad, bad boy.

TOMMY (*grins*). Did it hurt?

CLARICE. Certainly it hurt. What made you do it?

TOMMY. I wanted to see if you leaked any sawdust.

CLARICE. The idea. I haven't any sawdust in my—well, anyhow it hurt. (*Climbs back on table.*)

TOMMY. And ain't you got a lot of wheels inside somewhere? (*Lays pistol on table.*) Or in your head or some place? (*Feels of her head.*)

Enter TOOTS from R. She carries a dishpan and towel. Stops short in surprise.

CLARICE. Why, no, Tommy. I guess I'm just like other folks around here. (*Discovers TOOTS. Smiles knowingly.*)

(*TOOTS takes position at back C. Watches curiously.*)

TOMMY. You're a whole lot purtier than Toots, and a heap nicer. (*Puts arm about her waist.*)

(*TOOTS drops dishpan to floor with a crash, then runs and hides behind chimney corner. CLARICE and TOMMY huddle together in fright for a moment, then TOMMY grabs pistol and whirls about, flourishing pistol.*)

CLARICE. Be careful, Tommy.

TOMMY (*closing eyes and flourishing pistol*). Throw up your hands, you gosh blamed robber. I got ye covered.

CLARICE (*looking cautiously all about*). Why, Tommy, there's nobody here.

TOMMY (*shaking with fright but speaking boastfully*). Well, it's a mighty lucky thing for them there isn't. I'd a shot his head off and thrown it in his face.

CLARICE (*laughs*). I need have no fear when you are around. Come here and sit down. (TOMMY *gets back on table beside her*.) So you think I'm prettier than Toots, do you?

TOMMY. Oh, mucher. You got purtier clothes and hair and everything.

TOOTS *sticks head from behind chimney corner*. BUD *enters from L. Starts in surprise. He is unscen by others*.

BUD (*aside*). Well, I'll be darned.

CLARICE (*suddenly discovering BUD, aside*). Aha! Bud's here. (To TOMMY.) You know, Tommy, I didn't think so much of you at first, but now—now I think you're the nicest boy I ever met. (BUD *shakes fist*. TOOTS *makes wry face*.)

TOMMY (*silly laugh*). Gosh! And I think you're the slickest gal I ever met. (TOOTS *makes another grimace*.)

CLARICE. I'm so glad you like me. (*Strokes his face*.)

TOMMY. Say, what's your name, anyhow.

CLARICE. My name? Oh, you may call me Baby Doll. (*Comedy business by BUD and TOOTS at mention of name*.)

TOMMY. Baby Doll! Say, that's a humdinger of a name. You know, Baby Doll, there's a fellow comes around here to see my cousin, Clarice. His name is Bud Barlow. And Bud's a purty slick chap, too. Lots of people can't tell Bud from me, only I'm a purtier fellow than him.

CLARICE. Well, I should say you were. (*Comedy business by BUD*.)

TOMMY (*suspiciously*). How do you know?

CLARICE (*confusedly*). Well, I—I—know that no man could be as handsome as you are, darling. (*Pats his cheek*.)

TOMMY. Gosh! That tickles good. (*Business by BUD and TOOTS.*)

CLARICE. But why did you speak of this person? What did you say his name was?

TOMMY. Bud Barlow.

CLARICE. My, what a common, vulgar name. (*BUD gasps.*)

TOMMY. I spoke of him, Baby Doll—gosh, but that's a purty name. I like to say that name. I spoke of Bud Barlow because he's a purty slick chap with the gals, and I thought maybe he'd come around here and cut me out with you.

CLARICE. He hasn't a chance in the world. (*BUD shakes fist.*)

TOMMY. He thinks he's smart, but he ain't. He only thinks he is. (*CLARICE laughs. BUD frowns.*)

CLARICE. You are such a funny boy. But—but you haven't done anything yet.

TOMMY (*puzzled, looking about*). Done anythin'? Wadda you mean, done anythin'?

CLARICE. You know what I mean. (*Puckers up lips.*) You—you haven't kissed me yet. (*Astounded business by BUD and TOOTS.*)

TOMMY. Gosh! How'd you know there was anything like a kiss? You ain't been alive only a few hours.

CLARICE. I don't know, but I'm willing to take a chance. (*Puckers lips. BUD and TOOTS display anger.*)

TOMMY (*bashfully*). I—I ain't used to doin' anythin' like this on such a short notice.

CLARICE. But I insist.

TOMMY. Did you ever have a kiss before?

CLARICE (*slowly and impressively*). No. I was never kissed before in all my life. (*BUD throws up both hands. TOMMY leads CLARICE to L. door.*)

TOMMY. You know, Baby Doll, you get ready like you'd been on the job before sometime. (*Wipes his lips with back of hand.*) Now this is going to tickle a whole lot. (*CLARICE and TOMMY exeunt L. door, followed by BUD.*)

Enter HERMAN from R., closely followed by MRS. HEINIE. Swift action to finish.

MRS. HEINIE (*excitedly*). Don't tell me to go—well, where you told me to go. I want you to distinctly understand that I am boss of this house. Understand, boss of this house.

HERMAN. You can be the boss; I don't care. All I want is my Masterpiece. She is gone. (*Looks wildly about, wringing hands.*)

TOOTS (*coming from hiding place*). That there doll just went down the road there lickity-split.

MRS. HEINIE. And His Royal Highness?

TOOTS. Was after her likewise lickity-split.

HERMAN (*going towards door L.*). Ach, I must go after her.

MRS. HEINIE. And I—I must go after him—my Royal Prince. (*They exeunt L., hurriedly.*)

TOOTS (*going to door and looking out*). There goes the doll, Tommy, Mr. and Mrs. Heinie—and the Devil is after 'em all. Ain't he just splen-did?

Enter DORA MEE and PECK from R. TOOTS conceals herself.

PECK (*to DORA*). Ah, my darling, no matter what comes of my visit here, I shall have ample reward for all my misfortunes in the fact that you love me and that I love you.

DORA. Oh, but this is so sudden.

PECK (*puts an arm about her waist*). Don't let that worry you. It is always sudden when a love like ours occurs. Come. Let us stroll in the garden, where we may escape this din and be alone.

DORA (*comic sigh*). Yes, I love to be alone—with you, dear Henry. (*They exeunt L., in comic love-making manner. TOOTS comes from hiding place, looks after them.*)

TOOTS. Oh, gosh! Some more “mush.” What's the matter with this house today? Everybody's got it but me. As for me, my lovin' disposition has sure got an awful jolt. (*Goes to dining table.*) And Tommy—Tommy said as how

I wasn't purty and didn't have no fine clothes. But I'll show him. I'll tog up and paint my face—and be a real lady. (*Sinks into a chair, elbows on table, with deep emotion.*) I'll be there, Tommy Tucker. I'll be there with bells on, and every one a-ringin'!

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

Exterior of HERMAN'S house. Early evening. Set house with practical steps R. Back wood drop or meadow view. Picket fence across the back with gate opening at C. Garden bench down L. of C. Hammock swung at L. On porch there are three or four flower pots for HERMAN to break.

At rise, enter HERMAN through gate at C. He stops and looks off R. and L., sighs wearily and crosses to porch steps and pauses.

HERMAN. It ain't no use yet. My Masterpiece is gone. Stolen by that robber. Ach, all my labor gone for nothing—all for nothing. My wife is right. I am shoost a good-for-nothing. Shoost a good-for-nothing. (*Goes wearily up steps and into house.*)

Enter BUD gate. Comes down to bench, after first glancing cautiously all about.

BUD. Well, I guess I played the Devil all right, all right. And I certainly balled up everything in fine shape. (*Sits on bench.*) Now everybody hates everybody they shouldn't, and everybody loves everybody they shouldn't. Clarice has thrown me over for Tommy, Tommy has Toots crying her eyes out, Mrs. Heinie is madly in love with the Devil, poor old Mr. Heinie is nearer crazy than he has ever been, the gentleman with the butt-in habit has still got it, and—oh, it's a fine mess. (*Rises and waves arms despairingly.*) A fine mess! But I'm not beaten yet. I am going to appoint myself chairman of the Squaring Committee, and set things right again. So keep both eyes on the regular chairman of the All Right League.

MRS. HEINIE (*inside house*). Toots Snodgrass, where are you? Go find His Royal Highness and ask him to join me in the garden. (*Appears on porch at finish of speech.*)

BUD (*aside*). Gee whiz! I've just appointed myself chairman of the All Right League, and—look who's here. (*Takes off hat with a gallant flourish and salutes her.*) Ah, good evening, Mrs. Heinie.

MRS. HEINIE (*at foot of steps, coldly*). Oh, so it's you, is it?

BUD (*cheerfully*). Surest thing you know, ma'am. But—have you lost something? Perhaps I might be of some assistance to you.

MRS. HEINIE (*walks toward gate, pauses half way, freezingly*). The only possible assistance you can ever give me, Mr. Bud Barlow, is to remove your presence from my sight—forever! (*Exits through gate, turning L. and off. BUD stares after her in amazement.*)

Enter TOMMY from house, stumbles down steps and starts towards gate, whistling loudly.

BUD. Hey, Tommy; wait a minute. I want to whisper in your ear.

TOMMY (*edging towards gate*). Ain't got a second. Got to find my wife. Besides, we don't want you hanging around here. Scat! (*Dashes out gate, turns L and off.*)

BUD (*recoils in astonishment, then laughs good naturedly*). I'm starting out great. I really believe I am going to like my new job. Ah, somebody else comes.

Enter HERMAN from house, down steps slowly.

HERMAN. Oh, it's you, eh, Bud? You ain't seen my—no, no, she's gone. Nobody will ever see her again. (*Starts for gate.*)

BUD (*eagerly*). Just a moment, Mr. Heinie; please, just a moment.

HERMAN (*not turning*). Got no time yet, Bud. I got to keep on and on until I find her again. Maybe I can see you later yet. (*Passes through gate, turns L. and off.*)

BUD (*pauses for effect, then suddenly*). Well, can you

beat it? I'm going to rehearse a couple of swear words in just a minute. Yes, I think for a starter I'll say damn. Damn! (*Sighs with relief.*) There. I feel much better.

Enter CLARICE, down porch steps. Comes on just in time to overhear him say "damn." She starts for gate with disdainful toss of her head.

BUD (*discovering her*). Clarice, my darling. At last I—

CLARICE (*coldly*). Mr. Barlow! How dare you—(*attempts to pass*).

BUD (*places a detaining hand on her arm*). Oh, please—just a moment—

CLARICE (*throws off his hand*). Mr. Barlow, you forget yourself! (*She tosses head disdainfully, then haughtily sweeps by him, passes through gate, turning R. and off.*)
BUD *fairly staggers in amazement to bench, sinks weakly on it.*

BUD. Holy griddle cakes! What a jolt for the merry chairman! Gee, I seem to be as popular about here as an Indian with the smallpox. (*Pauses.*) I wonder if that display of peevishness was on the square? (*Groans.*) Oh, but what a jolly mess I've made of things.

Enter DORA from L., runs through gate to porch, discovers BUD and stops abruptly.

DORA. Oh, hello! I hope I see you well.

BUD (*wearily*). And I hope you get your hope. (*As if struck with a sudden thought.*) Say, wait a moment, Dora—

DORA. No time, Mr. Barlow. I came to borrow a egg. See you after a while. Ta-ta! (*Runs rapidly into house.*)

BUD. Humph! Even she won't stop and talk to me. (*Rises suddenly, yanks off coat and rolls up sleeves in a business-like manner.*) Now, I am real angry. I'm going to make a bet with myself that the next person is going to talk to me or get his hair mussed.

Enter PECK from L. at back of fence. Goes to gate and stands staring at BUD, a pathetic figure.

PECK (*mournfully*). I beg your pardon—

BUD (*whirls about, facing PECK*). Well, I'll be—

PECK. I really and honestly beg your pardon.

BUD. So you've butted in here again, have you? Now shall I come to you and cave in your jaw, or will you have the kindness to come to me?

PECK (*leaning wearily against fence*). I have "butted-in," as you call it, once more. But I am afraid I cannot do it many more times. My constitution is not what it used to be, sir. Look me over. (*Turns slowly about for BUD's inspection.*) However, I do not complain. I have always been faithful to any trust imposed on me, and I—however. I waste my time with you. I desire to see Mr. Heinie.

BUD. Delighted, I am sure. (*Close to PECK.*) Mr. Heinie just went in that direction. (*Points L.*) The very same direction that you are going in now. (*Grabs him by coat collar and seat of trousers and runs him off L. Comes back to bench and sits down.*) There! I feel much better now.

Enter DORA from house with egg in her hand, runs down steps to gate, pauses at gate.

DORA. Good-bye, Bud Barlow. Maybe I'll see you later and maybe I won't. (*Runs off L.*)

BUD (*glances about*). Well, I've come in more or less contact with the whole darned family now—except Toots. Wonder where Toots is.

TOOTS enters from house. Poses on porch. Picture. She is dressed in a burlesque evening gown and acts in grand manner. Looks at BUD.

TOOTS (*aside*). "Ain't he just splen-did!" (*Assumed voice.*) I beg your pardon, sir.

BUD (*looking at her in surprise, jumps to feet, struggles into his coat. Aside*). Gee whiz! Here's one I haven't caught yet. (*To her.*) Certainly you may beg your pardon. Allow me to beg yours also—just to help things along.

TOOTS (*laughs, then speaks in her natural voice*). Dear me suds! You never knowed me, did you?

BUD (*surprised*). Toots Snodgrass! Well, I'll be—

TOOTS (*interrupting*). Now, now. Remember I am a lady. Say, how do I stack up, anyhow? (*Whirls about for his inspection.*)

BUD (*admiringly*). Immense! If you hadn't tipped me off, I'd never known you.

TOOTS I'm *there*, ain't I?

BUD (*laughs*). Forty ways, Toots. (*Suddenly.*) But say. How do I find *you* talking to *me*?

TOOTS (*surprised*). Hey?

BUD. You're the first person singular or plural that has handed me a civil word for some time.

TOOTS. Oh, I ain't so particular who I talk to.

BUD (*laughs good-naturedly*). Thanks. Get in. You're all right. (*Shakes her hand heartily.*) You're all right. (*Shakes her hand again.*)

TOOTS. Say, what's the idea? (*Puzzled.*) Want to borrow money or something?

BUD. No. I'm in trouble, Toots. Nobody else would give me a look-in but you. Now you've got to help me out. Will you help a poor orphan?

TOOTS (*heartily*). Bet your boots, Bud Barlow!

BUD (*grabs her hand and shakes it vigorously*). Toots, you're all right.

TOOTS (*prying hand loose*). I know, but nix on that. (*Feels of her hand.*) I may want to use that hand again some day—you never *can* tell. Now tell mother your troubles.

BUD (*sighs deeply*). Toots, I'm in love.

TOOTS. Oh! (*Sighs.*) So am I.

BUD. But I've been badly used, Toots. (*Sighs.*)

TOOTS (*sighs*). So have I. My lovin' disposition has had several kinks put in it since last I saw you. (*Sighs.*)

BUD. I love Clarice. (*Sighs.*)

TOOTS. And Tommy's got my goat. (*Sighs.*)

BUD. Too bad. (*Sighs.*)

TOOTS. It's worsern that. (*Sighs.*)

BUD. But why the glad rags, Toots?

TOOTS. Oh, these do-dads, you mean? Say, Mr. Barlow,

I just had to do this. Tommy was just breakin' my fond heart with his desperate flirtation.

BUD. I'm wise, Toots. Let me tell you all about it. Come on. We'll get away from the crowd and try to straighten things out.

TOOTS. You're on.

BUD (*grabs her hand and shakes it*). Once more, Toots. You're all right.

TOOTS. Ain't he just splen-did!

They exeunt L. 2, he with an arm about her waist. CLARICE enters from R., back of fence, just in time to see them exeunt. She stops in shocked surprise.

CLARICE (*alone*). Well, 'pon my soul! If Bud Barlow isn't making love to *another* woman. Now I wonder who *that* can be? (*Comes down and sits on bench, dejectedly.*) Oh, dear me! (*Sighs.*) I'm sure I loved him with all my heart. (*Sobs.*) But now—now I hate him. Oh, how I hate him! That is, I'm quite sure I do.

CLARICE *may introduce song here at option.* HERMAN *enters from house. Comes to bench.*

HERMAN. Ah, my child. Why all alone?

CLARICE (*confusedly*). I—oh, nothing. That is, I was just thinking, uncle dear.

HERMAN (*sits beside her, wearily*). Ach, this has been a queer day. Everybody and everything is queer. I can't find my doll no place yet. Maybe I never had none—yes?

CLARICE. Oh, uncle! It's—it's all my fault. (*Sobs.*) I thought I was doing it all for the best—for your sake.

HERMAN (*puzzled*). Your fault? My sake? (*Puts a hand to head.*) I can't think it out yet, so easy like I used to once. I think I'm what Tommy would call a mutt—yes?

CLARICE. No, no, uncle. Listen. Bud—I mean Mr. Barlow—and I planned it. He discovered that you—you were losing your—your mind over this automatic doll question. He disguised himself as—as Mephisto, and I—I was the doll that came to life.

HERMAN (*agitatedly and rising to feet unsteadily*). I—I—go on yet. What next will you tell me?

CLARICE. That's all, uncle—that's all.

HERMAN (*presses both hands to head as if in great pain and falls heavily back onto bench*). Mein Gott! She says, "That's all!" Ach, Gott! (*Sobs and displays intense agitation at the shock of her disclosure. Opportunity for fine bit of acting.*)

CLARICE (*alarmed, throzes arms about him, soothingly*). There, there, dearie. Don't! Don't! It will be all right.

HERMAN (*rising to feet, vehemently*). Ach, you don't know what you have done—what you are saying yet. It will *not* be all right. Do you realize what it means to me yet that you have trifled and fooled with my lifelong ambition? You have shattered and broken my one wonderful dream! For years I have slaved and worked, believing that some day I should discover the spark of life, inject it into my Masterpiece, and then you—you in your silly, brainless fashion upset all my plans. (*Pauses, with hands pressed to head, fairly sobs.*) Ach, Gott! My head! My head! (*She attempts to break in and console him, but he checks her with a gesture.*) Wait! You don't realize yet what you've done. Listen. I got to face everybody—got to have them stare at me with a laugh on their face—and listen to their sneering words while they call me an old crack-brained fool. Got to face my wife—hear her call me a "good-for-nothing." You understand now what you have done yet? (*Laughs in hysterical manner.*) Ha, ha, ha! That wife of mine—Gott! When I think yet what she will do and say—no, no! (*Violently.*) No, I shall not listen to her. I shall not listen, I tell you. I shall assert myself. I shall no longer be a mere cipher in my own house. I *shall* be master! Master! Do you understand? See! (*Rushes to porch, picks up flower pot and dashes it to ground, then the others, one after the other, and dashes them to ground; laughs in maniacal fashion.*) Ha, ha, ha! Thus do I assert my new authority.

CLARICE. Oh, uncle, uncle—please!

HERMAN. I'll show her—show you all I can be a man yet. I bought a new pair of trousers yesterday, and now, by golly, I shall wear 'em from now on. (*Presses hands to head, then suddenly he drops them, looks at her, all about and smiles gently.*) I—I—it's gone. The pain, the jumble—my head is clear again yet. I—I—(*laughs gently.*) I been an old fool yet, ain't I? But it's all over now. I see things clear. I see that my spark of life dream couldn't be. Now I am awake—awake at last. (*Puts out his arms to her.*)

CLARICE (*with a glad cry springs to the shelter of his arms*). And you—you are not angry?

HERMAN. No, child. I am glad. Glad you have brought me to my senses. (*Sighs.*) But all the time I think I am a great inventor yet.

CLARICE. And so you are, uncle. No man ever made such wonderful dolls as you do. (*Pats his cheek lovingly and kisses him.*)

HERMAN (*sighs*). And so—it's all over now yet. But you done everything for the best. I had a big screw loose in my head. And you—you took it out—you and Bud. But go. Go into the house, child. I got to be alone and think this out yet.

CLARICE (*kisses him, goes to steps*). Good-night, uncle dear.

HERMAN. Wait. I don't see Bud about. He was here, but—has he gone?

CLARICE. I don't know, and I don't care. (*Runs quickly up steps and into house, sobbing as she goes.*)

HERMAN. So! She is crying yet. Perhaps it's a lover's quarrel. Ach, they all do that. Bud is a fine fellow. They must be got together again yet. (*Sits on bench and gazes sorrowfully all about. Musingly.*) Humph! No doll endowed with the spark of life. No Devil—no nothing. (*Pause, then quickly.*) By golly, if those things wasn't, maybe I ain't got no wife yet.

MRS. HEINIE *enters from back R., passes through gate,*

casting searching glances all about. Discovers HERMAN on bench. Comes down C.

MRS. HEINIE (*sharply*). Oh, so there you are, are you?

HERMAN (*quick comedy start of surprise, aside*). Ach, I got a wife yet.

MRS. HEINIE. Have you seen His Highness about?

HERMAN (*innocently*). About what?

MRS. HEINIE. About here or the house, you stupid.

HERMAN (*slowly and impressively*). No, my dear. There never was no His Highness.

MRS. HEINIE. Why, what do you mean? Has this business completely turned your head?

HERMAN. Yes, it has, thank God. (*Rises.*) Now, listen to me, please. From now on you take orders from me. You get them silly notions out of your head that you are boss. Look at me, madam. Look close at the real boss of this establishment. (*Assumes a commanding attitude.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*astounded*). Why, Herman Heinie, I'll show—

HERMAN (*raising a hand*). Stop! You've shown me too long. Your place is in the kitchen—that's where you belong. Go!

MRS. HEINIE (*stares at him an instant*). Well, for goodness sake! I can't understand these goings on at all. I say, I can't understand—

HERMAN (*interrupting, gently*). There, there. You go in and Clarice will tell you all about everything. Go. (*She is too astounded for speech and stares in blank amazement at him as she goes to steps, up them and into house. HERMAN sits on bench, takes out pipe and lights it. Meditative pause. HERMAN, chuckingly*). By golly, this is a funny world. The things that are, ain't; and the things that ain't, are. *Enter TOMMY from house, bustling manner.*

TOMMY. Hello, pop. Seen my wife anywhere?

HERMAN. No, but I just saw mine. (*Chuckles.*)

TOMMY. Well, I want her, I do.

HERMAN. Tommy boy, there ain't a-going to be no wife for you.

TOMMY. What? Ain't I a-goin' to marry that purty gal you made for me?

HERMAN. No, Tommy boy. Everything is changed now yet. I shall have to make other plans for your future.

TOMMY. I don't want any plans. I want a wife.

HERMAN (*chuckles*). You ain't such a fool yet as I thought. (*Rises, pats TOMMY on head.*) Come into the house, Tommy, and I'll tell you how you lost your wife. (*They go to steps.*) I only wish somebody would tell me how I could lose mine. (*HERMAN exits in house.*)

Enter BUD and TOOTS, L. 2.

BUD (*to* TOMMY). Hey, Tommy, come here and meet a lady.

TOMMY. I don't want a lady. I want a wife.

TOOTS. Dear me suds, Tommy! Don't you know me?

TOMMY (*surprised*). Gee gosh, if it ain't Toots.

BUD. Yes, Tommy, it's Toots. Toots all dressed up. You nearly broke Toots' heart, Tommy, with your flirting. But she's going to forgive you, and you're going to take Toots back to your heart again. And there—get together. (*Forces them into an embrace.*)

TOOTS (*pulling away after a short embrace*). Don't muss my clothes. Fine clothes like these don't come up and shake you by the hand every day.

TOMMY (*admiringly*). Gee gosh, but ain't she purty! (*Scans his own apparel.*) Say, fine clothes do make a lot of difference, don't they? Maybe if I was kinder dolled up—say, look here. You ain't goin' to slip anything over on me, Toots Snodgrass. (*Turns and dashes up the steps, stops on porch, turns.*) I'm goin' to show you that I can be a sport, too. Just stick around a bit and keep your eye on Tommy Tucker.

BUD. Wait a minute, Tommy. Is everything all right—here? (*Indicates* TOOTS.)

TOMMY. Bet yer boots! (*Dashes into house.*)

TOOTS (*feelingly, to* BUD). Say, you're all right, Bud Barlow. Get in. (*Grabs his hand and shakes it vigorously.*) Now I'm goin' in the house and send somebody out here

to see you. (*Goes to steps, turns.*) And it won't be Mrs. Heinie, either. (*Exit into house.*)

BUD (*alone*). Well, I'll do my best—I'll do better than my best. She's just *got* to come across—that's all.

Enter CLARICE from house. Stops on porch, looks down as if searching for some article.

CLARICE. Strange where it could have gone to—

BUD (*interrupting*). Did you—did you lose something? (*Aside.*) Everybody around here appears to have lost something.

CLARICE. Yes—my handkerchief. Oh, I forgot. I'm not to speak to you. (*Turns to re-enter house.*)

BUD. Oh, is that so? (*Sternly.*) Well, you will talk to me. Come right down here, young woman.

CLARICE (*comes slowly down steps*). I—I shall do nothing of the kind, Mr. Barlow. (*At foot of steps.*)

BUD (*at bench*). Now come right over here.

CLARICE (*comes to bench*). I shall not do that either, Mr. Barlow.

BUD. Sit down.

CLARICE. I'll not sit down. (*Sits.*)

BUD (*sits beside her*). Why, I never saw such a contrary young woman in all my life. You won't do a solitary thing I ask you to.

CLARICE. I don't see why I should after the way you've treated me, Mr. Barlow.

BUD (*coaxingly*). Say, put the soft pedal on that Mister thing, won't you?

CLARICE. No, that's something else I decline to do, Mister Barlow.

BUD (*commandingly*). Young woman, call me Bud!

CLARICE. I positively refuse to call you—Bud.

BUD (*laughs*). Oh, what a cinch!

CLARICE (*indignantly*). Sir! (*Springs to feet.*)

BUD (*pulls her down beside him again*). Now, nix! You've been a real nice little girl. Don't spoil it.

CLARICE. Bud Barlow, I won't be talked to like this. If

you have anything important to say, I'll listen. Otherwise, I'll go.

BUD. Hold on. I've got a mixture of both to get rid of. (*Looks about.*) Let's get in the hammock—what?

CLARICE (*coldly*). I much prefer the bench.

BUD (*rises and crosses to hammock*). Young woman, come here—and in a hurry!

CLARICE (*rises and crosses meekly to him*). That is still another command I refuse to obey.

BUD (*commandingly*). Sit in the hammock, young woman!

CLARICE (*sits in hammock, meekly*). I utterly refuse.

BUD (*sits beside her*). Ah, this is better. Now I can say something of importance. Give me a kiss.

CLARICE (*trying to evade him*). Bud Barlow, you're the most impudent fellow I ever met.

BUD. Think so. (*Kisses her.*) Say, the chap that invented the hammock thing, I'll bet had a girl just like you. (*Puts arm about her.*) No. I'll take that back now. She couldn't have been *just* as nice as you. Anyhow, be it ever so humble, there's no place like a hammock—with a girl in it.

CLARICE (*laughing in spite of herself*). For goodness sake, please be sensible.

BUD (*seriously*). All right, girlie, I will. Now I am going to marry you, and you are going to marry me.

CLARICE. What! After the way you made love to Mrs. Heine? And that—that other woman I saw you with. No, no; let me go. I had forgotten—

BUD. Oh, now behave. I made love to your aunt as a joke, and to teach her a lesson. That *other* woman was—Toots.

CLARICE (*sighs happily*): Oh!

BUD. Now, after you say, "Bud, I love you and will be your wife," I'll go in the house, tell your uncle everything and ask him for you.

CLARICE. That isn't necessary. He knows all about our plotting, and—oh, Bud, he's ever so much better now.

BUD. And so am I—now. (*Kisses her.*) But on the level, I'm glad everything is all fixed up. And so—so you're going to be Mrs. Barlow, are you?

CLARICE. Please do be sensible, Bud. Why, what can we marry on?

BUD (*carelessly*). Oh, on a Wednesday, a Thursday or a Friday—any old day; I don't care.

CLARICE. Oh, you know what I mean. I haven't a cent in the world.

BUD. Fine! Neither have I.

CLARICE. That's why—why I hesitate. What's going to support us?

BUD. Say, I'll go to work. I don't care what happens to me. In the meantime, little girl, you run in the house and tell your uncle to come out. You see I want to close this deal—quick.

CLARICE (*rising, pouting*). That sounds as though you were dickering for a gold mine.

BUD (*kisses her*). I am.

CLARICE (*crossing to steps, turns*). There's money in a gold mine. I'm "broke." (*Laughs and exits into house.*)

BUD (*alone, rising from hammock*). Bless her heart! I'd work my head and hands off for her. And I'm glad she is "broke," too. No one can say I am marrying for money. Gee whiz! But I'm the happiest chap in Happy Hollow.

Enter PECK from back, R. Comes to gate.

PECK. I really beg your pardon, sir—

BUD (*confronting him*). What? Again?

PECK (*comes down C.*). Really, you know—don't agitate yourself, I pray. . . . And please don't kick me any more. This thing of being faithful to a trust is possibly a grand and glorious thing; but it's dreadfully trying on one's constitution. Unless I obtain a hearing very soon, they will have to put another man on the job. (*Pathetically.*) Look at me, sir. (*Turns about for BUD's inspection.*) But I am wasting my time. I surely must see Mr. Heinie. (*Turns toward steps.*)

BUD (*grabs him*). Say, hold on. What the—what the deuce to you want around here, anyhow?

PECK (*dismally*). I don't want much, sir; but I seem to have collected quite a lot. Would you mind looking me over again, sir? (*Turns around.*) No? Well it doesn't matter. The object of my visit here today, sir—would you mind listening?

BUD. No. Go ahead. I'm the happiest chap in Happy Hollow.

PECK (*produces legal-looking paper from an inside pocket*). This is the thing. 'Tis merely a detail, sir—merely a detail. If you please, sir, this document relates in fully described terms the title to an estate valued at \$50,000 to one Clarice Higgins, whose aunt, Mrs. Martha Higgins by name, died very suddenly in Boston a few days ago.

BUD (*bewildered, looks from document to PECK and back again*). What! What did you say? No, no; you didn't say it. I am dreaming. It can't be true. You must be kidding.

PECK. No, sir; here's the paper. You may see for yourself.

BUD (*looking blankly at paper*). Oh, Lord, it must be true! (*Hangs head dejectedly.*) It must be true.

PECK. What's the matter, sir. You appear downcast. Why are you not pleased at her good fortune?

BUD. Good fortune? Say, that girl just promised to marry me, and now—now you, the kill-joy, butt in and spoil it all. Confound you, anyhow! (*Threatens PECK.*)

PECK (*backing away in alarm*). Why—why it's—it's not my fault. But, really, I can't understand, sir. You should be delighted at her good fortune, and your own, seeing that she is to marry you, sir.

BUD. Drive along with that chatter. Everybody will say that I married her simply for her money, and—oh, hang it all, why didn't her Aunt Martha have sense enough to postpone her death for a year or so?

PECK. Well, sir, that is just the way with some women. They never do seem to do the proper thing at the proper

time. But time presses. If you will permit me, I shall enter the house, transact my business, and be on my—

BUD (*interrupting, eagerly*). I say, old chap, you couldn't fall down and break your neck, could you?

PECK. Hey?

BUD. Break anything or something, just so she doesn't get that beastly money.

PECK (*thoughtfully*). I'm—I'm afraid not, sir. I have always been faithful to any trust reposed in me, and—but I almost forgot something.

BUD. Oh, Lord! What now?

PECK. During my brief but stormy visit here today, I have—have fallen in love.

BUD (*surprised*). Fallen in love? Say, you look like you'd fall off a ten-story building twice.

PECK (*scanning his apparel*). Yes, I'll admit my appearance is not at all lover-like; but that is no fault of mine, I assure you, sir. Pardon me just a moment, sir. (*Goes to gate and beckons off R.*) Come here, please.

Enter DORA from R. Comes to C.

BUD. Well, I declare.

PECK. Yes, sir; quite so. (*Puts an arm about DORA.*)

DORA. How do you do, Bud Barlow?

BUD. Me? Oh, I'm getting along fine. As for you, do you take this man to be your lawful husband?

DORA. I suppose so. He seems to be a real nice man.

BUD. What's his name?

DORA. Hey? (*Surprised.*)

BUD. What's your future husband's name?

DORA. My gracious, I don't know. I didn't even stop to ask. (*BUD displays comedy consternation.*)

PECK. Permit me to introduce myself to you both. My name is Peck—Henry Peck.

BUD. Fair enough. (*DORA acknowledges introduction with a low bow.*)

PECK. But you are a gentleman of keen judgment and appear to be well posted in the art of love and marriage. Perhaps you might advise us.

BUD. Lord, man, you're calling up the wrong number. I'm looking for advice myself.

PECK. So? I wouldn't think it, to look at you, sir. However, that's beside the point. My personal—that is, my love affair—must wait. The one thing now is to see Mr. Heinie. Come, sweetheart. (*To BUD.*) We will see you later, sir.

DORA. Ta-ta, Bud Barlow. Cheer up; it may not be true. (*DORA and PECK exeunt into house.*)

BUD (*laughing*). Gee whiz! This is certainly one day to be long remembered. (*Soberly.*) And I—I'm up a tree. That \$50,000 is something to think about. I'll go take a walk and think it over. (*He exits through gate, turns L., with head bowed and hands thrust deep in coat pockets.*)

Enter TOMMY from house. He is dressed in comedy dress-up clothes. Wears white gloves, white flower in button-hole, and jauntily swings a cane. Comes down steps in comedy manner, looking all about.

TOMMY. Gee gosh, I done it! I guess I ain't some sport now, eh? Say, when Toots sees me she'll look around for a soft spot to throw a fit in. Wonder where she is. (*Whistles.*) *Enter Toots from house.*

TOOTS (*throws up both hands in surprise*). Well, dear me suds!

TOMMY. Didn't think it was in me, did you? (*Struts proudly about.*)

TOOTS. Say, if I wasn't so chockful of excitement, I'd tell you what a nice looking boy you are, but—guess what?

TOMMY. Can't. Too much dressed up.

TOOTS. A lawyer chap from Boston just come in and handed Miss Clarice a million dollars, all in five-cent nickels and ten-cent dimes.

TOMMY. Huh! Quit tellin' stories.

TOOTS. It's the terrible truth, Tommy. It's the same man that Mr. Heinie thought was a robber, and he's a lawyer.

TOMMY. Well, what's the difference?

TOOTS. None *a*-tall!

TOMMY. Say, Toots, maybe Clarice will give me ten or twenty cents toward our wedding. How much is a million dollars, anyhow?

TOOTS. Don't ask me. I can't count over twelve dollars to save my life.

TOMMY (*puts arm about her*). Well, we don't care, do we?

TOOTS. 'Bout what?

TOMMY. 'Bout nothin'. Nothin' but love, I mean. Everything's been kinder excited like today. Bud Barlow and Clarice fooled pop, and maw made love to the Devil, and—

TOOTS. You made love to Miss Clarice.

TOMMY. Never did.

TOOTS. I seen you—so there.

TOMMY. Never did.

TOOTS. You did; you know you did.

TOMMY. Never, never did—cross my heart.

TOOTS. I seen you kiss her.

TOMMY. Well, I felt sorry for her. She said she never had one.

TOOTS. That ain't no excuse. I hate you.

Enter BUD from L. 2.

BUD. There, there, children; don't quarrel.

TOOTS. It's Tommy. He's always fightin', and—

BUD. How's everything inside, Toots?

TOOTS. Say, did you hear that Miss Clarice had a million dollars given to her?

BUD (*soberly*). Yes, I heard that. (*Brightly.*) But outside of that everything's all right, isn't it?

TOMMY. Gee gosh! He looks like she was dead and buried instead of havin' a lot of money wished on her.

TOOTS. Yes, a person would think you'd lost your best friend.

BUD (*soberly*). Maybe I have, Toots; maybe I have. But you and Tommy better take a little walk.

TOMMY. That suits me. Let's walk around, Toots, and give the neighbors a treat.

TOOTS. All right. Let's.

TOMMY. I know a whole lot of mushy talk, too.

TOOTS (*puts out her hand to BUD*). Say, get in again, will you?

BUD (*shaking her hand*). Sure, Toots, all the time.

TOOTS. You're all right, Bud Barlow. You're fifty-fifty with me any time I got that much. (*She takes TOMMY's arm and they parade grandly to gate. At gate she turns to BUD.*) Fifty-fifty with me any time I got that much. Good night. (*TOMMY and TOOTS exeunt gate, turning L. and off.*)

Enter HERMAN from house. Lights gradually lower.

HERMAN (*to BUD, putting out hand*). Bud, my boy, I want to say that I owe you more than I can ever repay yet.

BUD (*shaking his hand heartily*). Oh, that's all right, Mr. Heinie. It might have appeared like heroic treatment to you, but I'm tickled to death everything came out all right. (*Sighs.*) Everything except—(*brightly*) well, it was a fine day, wasn't it? (*Shaking HERMAN's hand again.*)

HERMAN. Ach, yes. To me it was the saddest and the happiest—if such a thing could be yet. Tonight I am *so* happy. Everybody has been so kind and good to me. Just like I was a boy, just getting over some sickness, and the neighbors all bring in nice things to eat—and then he gets the stomachache yet besides.

BUD (*laughs*). I think I know what you mean. You are happy and still you imagine that something will occur to upset it.

HERMAN. That's it, Buddy boy. I might eat too much of the neighbor's cookies and get the stomachache.

BUD. Forget that part of it. Everything's got O. K. branded on it in big letters.

MRS. HEINIE (*inside house, very tenderly*). Herman, dear—oh, Herman. Come in, won't you? I want you.

HERMAN (*smiles proudly*). You see—you notice the voice?

BUD. Yes—some different, isn't it?

HERMAN. Different? Everything is. (*Grabs BUD's hand and shakes it heartily.*) Bud, my boy, you're all right. My

wife says you are, and she knows. I say so because I know. Come in the house any time you wish—any time. (*Bows and starts to enter house.*) You know, Bud, I'm the boss around here now.

BUD (*laughs*). Thanks, Mr. Heinie—I'll remember that. But—but would you mind sending Clarice out. I want to say—to bid her good-night.

HERMAN. Sure, Buddie, my boy. Sure. (*Exit into house.*)

BUD (*sighs heavily*). Well, I've seemed to have fixed everything with everybody—except myself. Maybe I'm a darn fool. But, hang it all, I can't marry her money. I simply can't do that.

Enter CLARICE from house. Lights a little lower.

CLARICE. Why, Bud—come in.

BUD. No—you come out.

CLARICE (*comes down steps*). What's the matter?

BUD. Say, I want to get my release from the team. I can't play Big League ball if I sign up with you.

CLARICE. You—you mean you wish to break our engagement?

BUD (*turns away, soberly*). Yes—that's it.

CLARICE. But—but why? What have I done?

BUD (*turns quickly back to her*). Can't you understand? It's that confounded money. It's not you.

CLARICE. Oh!

BUD. You know. I can't have everyone panning me to a crisp, and calling me a fortune hunter, and—well, it can't be done—that's all.

CLARICE (*eagerly*). But you can prove an alibi, Bud. Remember, you asked me a long time before the money came.

BUD. Yes, but I can't go about with an alibi like that hanging to me. No, the alibi thing won't do. You've got to come stronger than that, you know.

CLARICE. Very well, Mr. Barlow. There happens to be a string tied to that legacy.

BUD (*joyfully*). What! Come on. Pull the string.

CLARICE. There was a clause in my Aunt Martha's will to the effect that should I marry anybody but one Harvey Howard, her adopted son, the \$50,000 was to go to a home for broken down cats.

BUD (*jumping about, joyfully*). Hurrah! And you—you—

CLARICE. Well, I've always had a tender spot in my heart for cats—especially the broken down ones.

BUD. Dear girl! And do you think I'm worth \$50,000?

CLARICE. Yes, every penny of it—and then a few besides.

BUD (*throws both arms about her*). Gee whiz! I'm groggy with joy. Hold on to me tight. (*They embrace.*)

MRS. HEINIE (*in the house, tenderly*). Herman, dear. I've laid out your clean linen on the spare room bed so it'll be handy for you in the morning. Remember, you promised to go to church with me.

HERMAN (*in house*). Yes, my darling; and thank you yet besides.

BUD (*laughs happily*). Gee, that sounds good. It makes us really believe that we have done something in this world after all. But—come on, sweetheart. Suppose we keep the dew off the hammock for a while.

CLARICE (*happy laugh*). Oh, Bud!

Lights quite dim, gradually dying out to a dark stage. BUD and CLARICE assume a loving-like attitude in the hammock. TOOTS and TOMMY enter, sit on bench and strike a comedy love-making pose. DORA and PECK enter and stand against fence, a loving picture.

HERMAN (*in house*). Tommy, Toots, Clarice, Bud! Where is everybody yet?

HERMAN *enters from house. He carries a lamp or electric torch with strong reflector. Goes to fence, throws light on PECK and DORA.*

HERMAN (*starts back with apology*). Beg pardon. I didn't know you was here yet. (*Goes to hammock, throws light on BUD and CLARICE, recoils with apology.*) Ach, likewise, I beg your pardon. (*Goes to bench, throws light on*

TOMMY *and* TOOTS.) By golly, the woods is full of 'em. (*He goes to the foot of steps.*) All my life I have been seeking for the spark of life; and now at last, when I have given up the idea, I find it. It's love—that's what it is—*Love!* Love, the spark of life. But it ain't for an old man like me to discover. It's for the young folks.

MRS. HEINIE (*coming out on porch*). Come, dear, it is growing late.

HERMAN. Good-night, my children—and may God bless you all yet.

TOOTS. Ain't he just splen-did!

CURTAIN.

Civil Service

By WALTER BEN HARE

Price, 25 Cents

Drama in 3 acts; 6 males, 5 females. Time, 2¼ hours. **Scene:** 1 interior. **Characters:** Old R. F. D., character lead. Inspector. Postmaster. Young Money Order Clerk. Mailing Clerk. Country Boy. Postmaster's Daughter. Lady of Importance. Hired Girl, character soubrette. A Collector. The Plucky Little Stamp Clerk, leading lady.

It depicts the joys and sorrows, the heartaches and struggles and temptations of a small group of government employes working in a postoffice in a small city in the middle west. A play with a punch with many a laugh—an occasional tear.

SYNOPSIS

Act I.—The work room of the postoffice. Octavia's birthday. Steve Audaine in debt. Old R. F. D. rides thirteen miles through the snow. "Old Bess ain't what you'd call a reindeer, but she's a good, faithful animile." Goldie Wex, the new substitute from the country. Steve in trouble with the collector. "You can't force me into the hands of the loan-sharks; I'd rather lose my job." A lady of importance, Mrs. T. R. Jeffs. Steve yields to temptation. R. F. D. tells the dramatic story of his life in prison. The little stamp clerk comes home. "My laddie, my laddie! My dream is over!"

Act II.—A half holiday. The postmaster's daughter announces her engagement. "I have risked my reputation to gratify her slightest desire." The letter for Ira Troutman, Esq. A little homestead in Montana. "There never was a cloud yet too dark to have a silver lining." R. F. D., the comforter. Goldie's lady friend, Miss Birdie Bivins, who works out. The postoffice inspector. Goldie in the toils of the law. "You lie, Steve Audaine, you stole that hundred dollars!" The sacrifice of R. F. D.

Act III.—The next morning. Birdie and Goldie looking for a license. "We don't want a dog license; we want a wedding license." The inspector and the plucky little stamp clerk. Kate is suspected of robbing the mails. Steve finds his father. Kate appeals to Mrs. Jeffs. "Would you send an old soldier to prison for life?" Mrs. Jeffs sees her duty and does it. "The sun is shining on a new life, and we'll all be together, me and my boy and my little princess."

Teacher, Kin I Go Home?

By HARRY L. NEWTON

Price, 15 Cents

A rural school episode; 7 males, 3 females. Time, about 35 minutes. **Scene:** A country school room. **Characters:** Hezekiah Quackenbush, the teacher. Mose Doolittle, the janitor. Pat Clancy, a school director. Gus Sweitzer, another. Hi Grass, a town selectman. Harold Green, the nice boy. Willie White, the bad boy. Ethel Grey, the pretty pupil. Betty Brown, the homely pupil. Martha Crabapple, a suffragette. The cast is elastic and more characters may easily be introduced. Drills, recitations, etc. can be added according to the talent available. A humorous bit of school life direct from Grass Center, Vermont.

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By **FREDERICK G. JOHNSON.**

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